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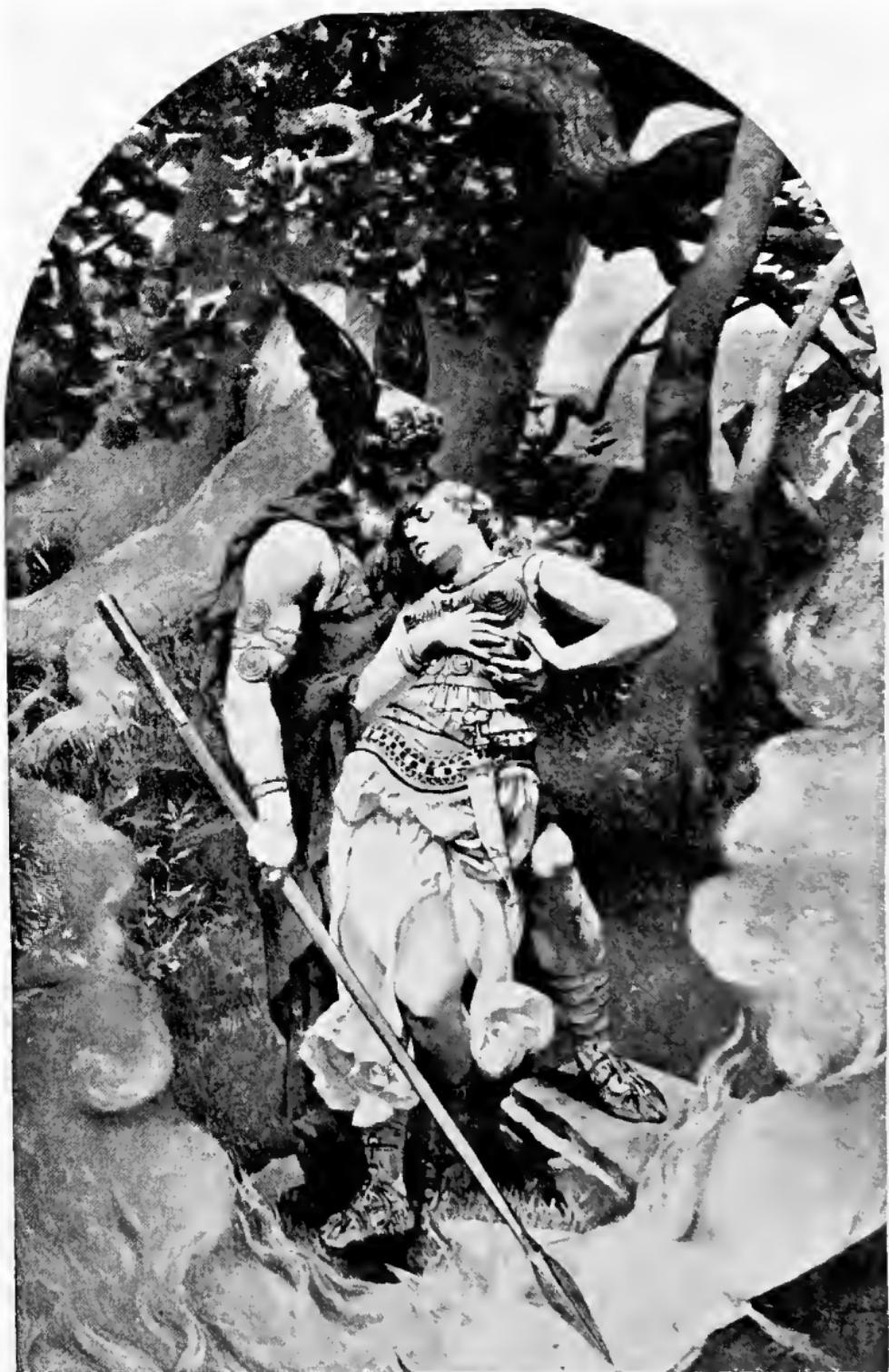
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WOTAN'S FAREWELL TO BRUNHILD.

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RICHARD WAGNER'S

POEM

THE RING OF THE NIBELUNG

EXPLAINED AND IN PART TRANSLATED

BY

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PREFACE.

ONE of the noblest heirlooms derived from Teutonic antiquity is the myth of the Nibelungs, that race of supernatural beings who were supposed to dwell in Nibelheim, the abode of mist and gloom. The beginning of the myth dates back to the prehistoric era of Teutonic life—to the time when Wotan, Thor, Fricka, and Freyja, together with other gods and goddesses, were worshipped in the primeval forests of Germany. The Nibelung myths and sagas have been transmitted to us in several versions, which differ widely as to the matter and leading ideas of the story. The primitive features of the myth were more or less transformed in the course of time, and certain events of historical character, entirely foreign to the original traditions, were gradually introduced.

Out of this great mass of various and often contradictory elements Richard Wagner in a certain sense created the Nibelung myth anew, endowed it with a most beautiful and harmonious form, and preserved its spirit true to the earliest traditions. By this work, apart from his other productions, Wagner is entitled to hold a prominent place among German poets. The

present volume is not written for musicians, and consequently does not contain many references to Wagner's music.* It has been *the principal aim of the author to consider the literary and poetic character* of "The Ring of the Nibelung," and to show that Wagner was a great poet as well as composer.

Before entering upon the study of Wagner's poem, it is necessary to give some attention to those versions of the Nibelung story which form the source of the poet's inspiration. In this connection the author is obliged to refer to one of his former works, entitled "The Great Epics of Mediæval Germany, etc.,† in which the object was to present an historical and critical account of those poems, and an essay on Wagner's drama was then foreign to the purpose. Yet as the Nibelungen Lied, the greatest of mediæval German poems, was one of the important works considered in that volume, special attention was bestowed on the elucidation of the whole Nibelung story. From the nature of the subject, it will be impossible to avoid here a repetition of a few statements made in the "Great Epics," particularly as to the *early* Nibelung traditions, since they throw light on Wagner's great drama. On the other hand, some of the ancient sagas which have no immediate bearing on the Nibelungen Lied, and were therefore omitted in the "Great Epics," will be here given because they play a prominent part in Wagner's treatment of the subject.

* Whenever it has seemed expedient to allude to the music, Francis Hueffer's words in his work on Richard Wagner have been quoted.

† Roberts Brothers, Boston, 1882.

Besides an acquaintance with the important versions of the Nibelung story, some knowledge of Teutonic mythology is required to understand and enjoy Wagner's poem. The purpose has not been to give a scientific treatise on this ancient religion, but merely to present such important features of early Teutonic belief as are indispensable to the understanding of the "Ring of the Nibelung." Thus the chapters on Teutonic mythology and on the Nibelung traditions are to be considered as an introduction to Wagner's drama. The greater part of the mythological facts are quoted from Jacob Grimm's "Teutonic Mythology" and R. B. Anderson's "Norse Mythology."

The introductory chapters are followed by a running commentary on the four dramas composing the "Ring of the Nibelung." The most beautiful and important passages of Wagner's poem have been translated by the author in the metre of the original. It is hoped that the present volume, aiming at a correct and thorough representation of a very interesting subject, will be found useful by the scholar as well as by the general public.

MASS. INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY,
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RING OF THE NIBELUNG.

CHAPTER I.

TEUTONIC GODS AND GODDESSES.

THE gods appearing in the “Ring of the Nibelung” are Wotan, Thor, Frô, and Loki; the goddesses are Fricka, Freyja, and Erda. The supreme divinity among all Teutonic races was Wotan.* To his worshippers he was the all-pervading creative power, the protector in war and battle, and the dispenser of victory. To him belonged the brave warriors who, having fallen on the battlefield, thence were conducted by his war-maidens, the Valkyrs, to the famous Valhall, their heavenly abode. As Jacob Grimm says in his “Teutonic Mythology,” probably it has been the belief of all good men that after death they would be admitted to a closer communion with the deity. Dying is therefore, even according to the Christian view, called going to God, turning home to God.† As Zeus was imagined by the Greeks to sit enthroned on Mount Ida, looking down on the human race, Wotan, according to old Norse tradition, surveyed the whole world from his lofty seat, named Hlidhskialf. The German sagas contain but few accounts of Wotan’s

* See page 237, note 1.

† See page 237, note 2.

outward appearance. In the Norse myths he is one-eyed, this peculiarity being accounted for in the following manner: Wotan once came to Mîmir's fountain, in which the greatest wisdom lay concealed. He was there compelled to leave one of his eyes in pledge before he could receive a drink.* According to the Yngl. Saga, the Aesir, the chief gods, who dwelt in Asgard, sent Mîmir, the wisest of men, to Vanaheim, the abode of the Vanir, originally a race of divinities different from the Aesir. The Vanir cut off Mîmir's head and sent it back to the Aesir. Wotan spoke magic words over it, so that it retained the power of speech, and whenever Wotan sought advice, he held conversation with it.

In the Norse myths Wotan often wears a broad hat and wide mantle; he is armed with a powerful and marvellous spear, Gûngnir by name. He over whom this spear flies in battle is doomed to perish, while the wielder of it obtains the victory. In the Volsunga Saga Sigmund's sword breaks asunder against Wotan's spear.† As the end of the world approaches, and the long-foretold Götterdämmerung (the twilight or darkening of time and gods) draws nigh, Wotan appears clad in the shining coat of mail, with the golden helmet on his head, and the spear in his hand, to lead his warlike host against the powers of evil and destruction. To Wotan as god of victory belong two ravens‡ and two wolves. The ravens are named *Huginn* (thought) and *Muninn* (remembrance). They sit on the shoulders of the god and whisper to him whatever they see and hear. The wolves were named *Geri* and *Freki*,

* See pages 36, 47 and 50. † See pages 50 and 139. ‡ See page 178.

and to them Wotan gave whatever food was placed before him, since he himself needed none. Wotan rode the eight-footed steed, named *Sleipnir*, the best of all horses. Jacob Grimm speaks in this connection of a curious custom of the people in Lower Saxony at harvest-time. He says: "It is usual to leave a clump of standing corn in a field to Woden for his horse. . . . *Sleipnis verdhr* (food) is a poetic name for hay. Yngl. Saga, cap. 21. Other sagas speak of a tall white horse, by which the god of victory might be recognized in battles. Christianity has not entirely rooted out the harmless practice for the Norse any more than for the Saxon peasant. In Schonen and Blekingen it continued for a long time to be the custom for reapers to leave on the field a gift for Oden's horses." Again, referring to the usage in Mecklenburg, Grimm says "that at the squire's mansions, when the rye is all cut, there is *Wodelbeer* served out to the mowers; no one weeds flax on a *Wodenstag* lest *Woden's* horse should trample the seeds. From Christmas to Twelfth-day they will not spin, nor leave any flax on the distaff; and to the question why, they answer, *Wode* is galloping across. We are expressly told this wild hunter, *Wode*, rides a white horse." A striking and well-known characteristic of nearly all mythologies is found in the belief that the god or gods descend to the earth to observe the life, deeds, and customs of mortal men. Wotan often appears as wanderer, in the Edda generally together with Loki and Hoenir. The name of Wotan can still be traced in our *Wednesday*, Anglo-Saxon *Wôdenes* or *Wôdnesdaeg*; in the names of certain mountains which formerly were

sacred to the god, particularly in Lower Germany; and in the designation of some towns and villages. "Near the holy oak in Hesse, which Boniface brought down, there stood a *Wuodeneshberg*, still so named in a document of 1154. . . . In Oldenburg there is a *Wodensholt*, now Godensholt, cited in a land-book of 1428. Ehrentraut Fries, arch. i. 445." When Christianity came to be introduced into Germany, the old faith could not be eradicated at once; the former gods and goddesses still lived in the memory of the people, and were generally transformed into dark and dreadful powers. Thus Wotan appears riding through the air followed by the furious host, *wütende heer*, named after him. The Mecklenburg peasant of this day imagines that in gloomy and tempestuous nights he hears the noise of Wotan's ride, and exclaims, "*de Wode tüüt!*"

The god who wields the lightning-flash and hurls the thunderbolt is called Thor. The Old Saxon form was Thunar, the Old High German *Donar*, the Anglo-Saxon *Thunor*, and the Old Norse *Thór*. Next to Wotan, Thor was regarded as the most powerful of the gods. He possessed the marvellous hammer, called *Mjölnir*, which was forged by dwarfs. The giants feared the mighty god when they saw his hammer flying through the air. Once Thor's hammer had been stolen by a giant named Thrym, and buried eight miles underground. The subject of this story forms one of the most beautiful poems of the Elder Edda. Thrym exclaimed, "None shall again obtain the hammer from me unless he bring to me Freyja as bride." Thor, disguised as Freyja, went to the abode of Thrym, recovered his hammer, and slew the giant and his race.

Thrym, whose name is derived from *thruma*, thunder, was originally identical with Thor and was an older god of nature, who had held possession of the hammer before the coming of the Aesir, or race of gods to whom Thor belonged. He assumed the power and position of a winter giant, and buried Thor's hammer eight miles underground; that is, during eight winter months he held his sway until Thor awoke, recovered his hammer, and by it freed the earth from the power of winter. Thunder and lightning, storm and rain, were attributed to Thor, as the god of fertility who cleared up the cloudy atmosphere. Thor's power is chiefly beneficent; in his constant battle with the winter giants, he splits mountains and rocks asunder by the mighty force of the thunderbolt, and prepares the barren, stony soil for cultivation.

The old Scandinavian sagas represent Thor with a red beard, "of course in allusion to the fiery phenomenon of lightning: when the god is angry, he blows in his red beard, and thunder peals through the clouds. In the Fornm. sög. 2. 182 and 10. 329 he is a tall, handsome, red-bearded youth. We have seen how, after the overthrow of the Teutonic gods by the introduction and spread of Christianity, Wotan was changed into a demon of evil; the like fate befell Thor. The god's hammer strikes dead, and the curses 'thunder strike you' and 'hammer strike you' mean the same thing. So, after the fall of the god Donar, there sprang up in some parts of Lower Germany, especially, a personification of the word Hamar in the sense of Death or Devil: '*dat die de Hamer!* *i vor den Hamer!* *de Hamer sla!*' are phrases still current among the people, in which you

can exchange Hamer for Düvel, but which, one and all, can only be traced back to the god that strikes with the hammer. . . . Consider also the curses which couple the two names, *donner* and *teufel*, both of which stood for the ancient god." According to the Edda, Thor's thunder-car was drawn by two he-goats, and when he drove, the earth groaned and the mountains trembled. Thor either drove in his chariot or walked; he was not supposed to have, like Wotan, a horse. As goats were sacred to Thor, common superstition attributed the power of having created them to the evil spirit, who in many ways came to be identified with the ancient thunder-god. The Swiss shepherds believe in the unholy origin of the goat, and her feet are particularly suspected, and not eaten. The name of the god has been retained in the appellations of many mountains in Germany, Scandinavia, and other countries. Well known is the *Donnersberg* in the Rhine palatinate. In Westphalia, not far from Warburg, is the *Thuncresberg*, "first mentioned in a document of 1100, Schaten mon. paderb. 1, 1649; in the Middle Ages it was still the seat of a great popular assize, originally due, no doubt, to the sacredness of the spot. . . . In the immediate vicinity of this mountain stands the holy oak, just as the *robur Jovis* bei Geismar in Hesse is near a *Wuotansberg*. To all appearance the two deities could be worshipped close to one another." In Norway and Sweden many statues and temples were sacred to Thor. Traces of his name appear in *Thorsborg* in Gothland, and *Thorskint* in East Gothland. Yet, although in Norway he was worshipped to such an extent that he might be called the national god of the Norwegians, no vestige

of his name seems to have survived there in the designations of rocks and mountains.

We have above referred to Thor's hammer as the crushing thunderbolt. Although the god hurled it at his foes, it always returned into his hands and was his constant weapon. According to German traditions, he threw wedge-shaped stones (*Donnerkeile*) from the sky. "In popular belief there darts out of the cloud together with the flash a black wedge, which buries itself in the earth as deep as the highest church-tower is high. But every time it thunders again, it begins to rise nearer to the surface, and after seven years you may find it above ground. Any house in which it is preserved is proof against damage by lightning; when a thunderstorm is coming on it begins to sweat." The name of the god is retained in our *Thursday*, Anglo-Saxon *Thunresdaeg* or *Thunoresdaeg*, in the Swedish *Thorsdag*, the Danish *Torsdag*, and the German *Donnerstag*. Thor, or Thunar, was one of the greatest gods of the Teutons; in many of his attributes he bears a close resemblance to the Greek Zeus and the Roman Jupiter, and we might expect him to rank with them as the chief of the gods. It is possible that he once held this supreme position before Wotan came to assume it as the god of the gods. It is certain that by the Swedes and Norwegians Thor was held in higher esteem than Wotan, while the latter seems to have been more fervently worshipped by the Gotlanders and Danes, as well as by the Saxons and other German tribes. In the Edda we read: "Wrathful with thee is Odin, wrath-

ful is the chief of the Aesir: Frey aecurses thee." The chief of the Aesir is Thor in this conneetion, and he is plaeed in the middle between the two other gods, as the mightiest of the three. Yet in spite of these isolated instances of Thor's position, if we survey the whole field of Teutonic mythology, as transmitted to us by tradition, we find that Wotan was the higher, loftier, and more intellectual divinity, while Thor's attributes pointed more to the exhibition of rude force and material strength.

The god Frô is called Frey in Norse mythology. He did not originally belong to the race of gods called Aesir, but to the Vanir gods, who, according to the Elder Edda, were different from the former. The war between the Aesir and the Vanir was ended by a treaty, according to which hostages were exehanged; Frey and his sister Freyja were given to the Aesir, and Hoenir, Wotan's brother, to the Vanir. Yet there was primitively no essential difference in the worship of the Aesir and Vanir, and the latter were received in Asgard, the home of the Aesir, and joined them in their battles against the Jötuns, or giants. Frô, or Frey, was not a warlike god; he gave away his horse and sword when love of the beautiful Gerda had taken possession of his heart. In the Elder Edda he is at times mentioned next to Wotan and Thor as the third god. He was chiefly invoked for fertility of the soil and for peace. We have but little information in regard to the worship of Frô (Frey) in Germany, but this is no reason for assuming that he was not revered by the German tribes as much as by the Scandinavians. The Swedes considered him one of their highest gods, and,

according to tradition, his statue at Upsala stood by those of Wotan and Thor.*

Loge, as Wagner calls him in his "Ring of the Nibelung," is the Norse Loki, the god of fire. It belongs to the province of mythological science to explain the difference between this Loki, one of the Aesir gods, and Logi, the giant. Yet it may be stated here that the two often very closely resemble each other. Loki's nature was twofold: It appears in his former fellowship with Wotan, and in his good intentions towards all the gods in Asgard, and in his later malicious exploits, by which at last the end of the world, the downfall of the gods, the *Götterdämmerung*, was accomplished. The two sides of Loki's character are explained by the beneficent and the destructive power of fire, his element. There are few myths in which the noble part of his nature is perfectly evident; in most accounts his advice and deeds, though eagerly sought for by the gods in their anxiety and misfortune, are at least dubious. It is proper here to give a short outline of the so-called Svadilfari myth, as it contains an incident of great importance in the Nibelung story, and shows at the same time Loki's duplicity. "When the gods were constructing their dwellings a certain artificer came and offered to build in the space of three half-years a residence so well fortified that they should be perfectly safe from the incursions of the frost giants and the giants of the mountains, even though they should have penetrated within Midgard. But he demanded for his reward the goddess Freyja,† together with the sun and moon. After long deliberations the gods agreed

* See page 237.

† See Rheingold, page 87.

to his terms, provided he would do the whole work himself without any assistance, and all within the space of one winter; but if anything remained unfinished on the first day of summer, he should forfeit the recompense agreed on. On being told these terms the artificer stipulated that he should be allowed the use of his horse, called *Svadilfari* (slippery-farer), and this, by the advice of Loki, was granted him. He accordingly set to work on the first day of winter, and during the night let his horse draw stone for the building. The enormous size of the stones struck the gods with astonishment, and they saw clearly that the horse did one half more of the toilsome work than his master. Their bargain, however, had been concluded in the presence of witnesses and confirmed by solemn oaths. As the winter drew to a close, the building was far advanced, and the bulwarks were sufficiently high and massive to render this residence impregnable. When it lacked but three days of summer, the only part that remained to be finished was the gateway. Then the gods inquired of one another who among them could have advised to give Freyja away or plunge the heavens in darkness by permitting the artificer to carry away the sun and the moon. They all agreed that none but Loki, the author of so many evil deeds, could have given such bad counsel. Then they took Loki and threatened him with death if he did not contrive to prevent the artificer from completing his task and obtaining the stipulated reward. Loki promised on oath that, let it cost what it might, he would so manage matters that the man should lose his recompense. That very night, when the artificer went with *Svadilfari*

for building-stone, a mare suddenly ran out of a forest and began to neigh. The horse broke loose and ran after the mare in the forest, which obliged the man also to run after his horse; and thus between one and the other the whole night was lost, so that at dawn the work had not made the usual progress. The man, seeing that he had no other means of completing his task, resumed his own gigantic stature, and the gods now clearly perceived that it was in reality a mountain giant who had come amongst them. No longer regarding their oaths, they called in Thor, who immediately ran to their assistance, and lifting up his mallet Mjölnir (the crusher), he paid the workman his wages in his own manner. With the first blow he shattered the giant's skull and hurled him headlong into Niflheim. From Loki, in the disguise of the mare, and Svaldifari came the horse with eight legs, which excelled all other horses ever possessed by gods or men. It was called Sleipnir, and became Wotan's battle-horse. The gods, however, had perjured themselves; and in reference to this, the Elder Edda says:

“ Then went the rulers there,
All gods most holy,
To their seats aloft
And took counsel together;
Who all the winsome air
With guile had blended,
Or to the giants' race
Freyja had given.

“ Then Thor, who was there,
Arose in wrathful mood,
For seldom sits he still
When such things he hears.

Annulled were now all oaths,
And words of promise fair,
And faith not long before
In council plighted."

Loki's pernicious influence is seen in the myth of Balder's death.* Loki was fair in appearance, but sly and treacherous in disposition. He was the slanderer of the gods, the spirit of fraud and deceit. Although himself one of the gods, he was feared and hated by them; he represented the principle of evil in its enticing and outwardly beauteous form. Loki is often seen in the company of the gods, as they needed his skill and strength, especially when their reign after the loss of primitive innocence was endangered by the evils resulting from the curse incurred through the acquisition of gold, the source of all ill. By his wife Sigyn, Loki had a son, named Nari or Narvi, and by the giantess Angrbodha (anguish-boding) three children, the above-mentioned Fenris-wolf, the Midgard-serpent called Jörmungandr, and a daughter Hel. The gods soon became aware that these monsters were brought up in Jötunheim (the home of the giants), and would bring destruction to Wotan and the other divinities. Wotan threw the serpent into the deep ocean by which the earth is surrounded. But the monster grew to such an enormous size that, holding his tail in his mouth, he embraced the whole earth. Wotan cast Hel into Nifheim, and gave her power over nine worlds, among which she distributes those who are sent to her, that is, all who die through sickness or old age. The Fenris-wolf was brought up among the gods; but when they

* See page 239.

saw that every day he increased prodigiously in size, and that forebodings warned them how he would one day become fatal to them, they determined to chain him. After two useless attempts to fetter the wolf in iron chains, Wotan sent Skirnir, the messenger of Frey, to the home of the dark elves, to have certain dwarfs make the magic chain called Gleipner. It was smooth and soft as silk, and yet very strong. With it the gods bound the wolf; then drawing it through the middle of a large rock which they sunk deep into the earth, they fastened the end to a massive stone which they sunk still deeper. The wolf in vain made the most violent efforts to break loose, and, opening his tremendous jaws, endeavored to bite the gods. They thrust a sword into his mouth, whereupon he howled terribly. There the wolf will remain until "Ragnarok," or the downfall of the gods.

Loki's wickedness had reached its highest point in the death of Balder, and the hour for the terrible punishment of the deceitful god approached. According to the Elder Edda, Aeger, the sea-god, gave a banquet, to which the gods were invited. On that occasion Loki abused all the gods and goddesses in the most shameful manner, whereupon Thor entered the hall and threatened Loki with cruel death. Although Loki had been abusive, he yet spoke the truth, and exposed the shortcomings of the gods, which preceded their fall. Peace had fled from them with the death of Balder, and, conscious of the approaching destruction of the world, they were dismayed. Loki fled from the banquet-hall after heaping curses on Aeger, and hid

himself in the mountains. There he built a dwelling with four doors, so that he could see everything that passed around him. After various stratagems the gods succeeded in capturing him. They dragged him into a cavern wherein they had placed three sharp-pointed rocks, boring a hole through each of them. They bound him on the points of the rocks, and a serpent was suspended over him in such a manner that the venom should fall into his face, drop by drop. But Sigyn stood by him, and received the drops, as they fell, in a cup, which she emptied as often as it was filled. While she was emptying the cup some of the poison reached Loki's face, which made him shriek with agony, and twist his body about so violently that the whole earth shook. There Loki had to lie until Ragnarok.

Foremost among the goddesses was Fricka, in Norse called Frigg, the wife of Wotan. She knows the fate of men, presides over marriages,* and her aid is invoked by the childless. It is a mother's love or conjugal love which is chiefly represented by Fricka, while Freyja is the love of the youth or maiden. "The forms and even the meanings of the two names border closely on one another. Freyja means the gladsome, gladdening, sweet, gracious goddess; Frigg, the free, beautiful, lovable. To the former attaches the general notion of *frau* (mistress); to the latter that of *fri* (woman)." Fricka (Frigg) was one of the Aesir; while Freyja, together with her brother Frô (Frey), were descended from the Vanir. Fricka can be compared to a certain extent with Here or Juno; Freyja is in many ways not

* See Hunding in the "Valkyr," page 129.

unlike Venus. With her, faithful lovers were gathered after death. She was the goddess chiefly worshipped after or along with Fricka. At the same time she was warlike; to whatever field of battle she rode, she claimed one half of the slain, the other half belonging to Wotan. In the Edda she was the owner of a precious necklace named *Brisinga men*. When Thor, to recover his hammer from the giants, disguised himself in Freyja's raiment, he adorned himself with the matchless treasure. The latter was also known to the author of the Anglo-Saxon poem Beowulf, and there is reason to believe that other Teutonic tribes were acquainted with it. "But this legend of the goddess's necklace gains yet more in importance when we place it by the side of the Greek myths. Brisinga men is no other than Aphrodite's *ορμός* (Hymn to Venus, 88), and the chain is her girdle, the *κεστὸς ἴμας ποικίλος* which she wears on her bosom, and whose witchery subdues all gods and mortals. How she looses it from about her neck (*ἀπὸ στήθεσφιν*) and lends it to Here to charm Zeus with, is told in a lay that teems with world-old myths (Il. 14, 214-18). As the *ἴμας* is worn in turn by Here and by Aphrodite, the Norse fable gives the jewel now to Frigg (Fricka) and now to Freyja." Freyja married Oder, but he forsook her in order to travel in distant countries. She sought him with tears the world over. Her tears were drops of pure gold, and in Norse poetry gold is called Freyja's tears. The most beautiful flowers were named after Freyja's hair, and even animate objects were named from their beauty after this goddess, as for instance the butterfly (Icel. Freyjuhoena—Freyja's hen).

"In almost all languages the Earth is regarded as female, and (in contrast to the father Sky encircling her) as the breeding, teeming, fruit-bearing mother: Gothic *airtha*, Old High-German *ärada*, *ärda*, Anglo-Saxon *eordhe*, Old Norse *jördh*. . . . The Old Norse-Jördh appears in the flesh, at once wife and daughter of Odhinn, and mother of Thôrr. . . . Distinct from her was *Rindr*, another wife of Odhinn, and mother of *Vali*, called *Rinda* in Saxo, and more coarsely painted; her name is the Old High-German *rinta*, Anglo-Saxon *rind* = cortex, hence *crusta soli vel terræ*. . . . But neither in Jördh nor in Rindr has the Edda brought out in clear relief her specially maternal character; nowhere is this more purely and simply expressed than in the very oldest account we possess of the goddess." This is found in Tacitus (Germ. 40), who ascribes the worship of the goddess *Nerthus*, whom he calls *mother earth*, to several German tribes. Upon an island in the ocean there was a sacred grove, in which the car of the goddess was kept. It was concealed from view by a garment, and only the priest was allowed to touch it. When he felt the presence of the goddess in the sanctuary, he reverently accompanied her in her journeys throughout the land; the car was drawn by two cows. Then happy days had come, and the people adorned themselves in festive attire wherever the goddess went. War ceased, weapons were laid aside, all iron gear was put away; peace and rest reigned in the land until the goddess, satiated with the converse of men, returned to her sanctuary. Then car, garment, and the goddess herself were bathed in a secret lake, which at once swallowed the slaves who had assisted at the bathing."

The island of Nerthus has been supposed to be Rügen, in the middle of which there is actually a lake, called the *Schwarze See*. Legends preserved on the island of Rügen seem to verify the supposition, yet on the whole the Danish islands in the Baltic have as good a claim to the former sanctuary of the goddess. Among other names of the earth-goddess we may mention here that of *Hlôdhyn*. In Old Norse *hlôdh* means a hearth. Thor is called “*môgr Hlôdhynjar*,” son of the hearth, or son of the earth. The name of the goddess means here protectress of the hearth, the fire-place, the foundation of human dwellings, like the German *herd*, and corresponds to the mother earth. “In Sweden it was Frey, son of Njördh, whose curtained car went round the country in spring, with the people all praying and holding feasts; but Frey is altogether like his father, and he again like his namesake, the goddess Nerthus.” It is natural that the all-nourishing earth, the mother of the human race, should be also the mother of the gods, in the belief of the Teutonic world. In all mythologies heaven is married to earth, as for instance Uranos to Gaia. According to Old Norse traditions, Wotan (Odin) enters into marriage relations with Jördh, Frigg (Fricka), and Rind. This is explained by Professor R. B. Anderson* in the following manner: Jördh (Erda, earth) is the original, uninhabited earth, or the earth without reference to man; Frigg is the inhabited, cultivated earth, the abode of man; and Rind is the earth when it has again become unfruitful, when the white flakes of winter have covered its crust: it is in this latter condition that she long resists the loving embraces

* Norse Mythology.

of her husband. These three relations are expressed still more clearly by their children. With Jördh, Wotan begets Thor; with Frigg, Balder; and with Rind, Vale. Jördh is the Greek Gaia, Frigg is Demeter; but the fortunate Greeks had no goddess corresponding to Rind: they knew not the severe Norse winter.

In the preceding pages the chief characteristics and attributes of each of the gods and goddesses who take part in Wagner's "*Ring of the Nibelung*" have been described as far as necessary for our purpose. In conclusion of this subject we may call attention to a few general facts concerning the condition of the gods, as imagined by their worshippers. In the background of Greek mythology is fate, the dim foreboding that the day will come when Zeus' reign shall end. Yet in spite of this fact there are but few allusions to the final overthrow of the gods. On the contrary, in the common belief of the people the gods were supposed to be immortal and eternal. This idea is very different from that entertained by the Teutonic race. In the Edda the death of the gods is often mentioned, and their final and inevitable downfall is distinctly stated. Fate was higher than the gods: the former reigns eternally; the gods rule for a limited time, although their term of life far exceeds that of mortal men. The gods have a means of preserving perpetual freshness and youth, and of prolonging their lives by particular kinds of food and drink. Although it is distinctly stated that Wotan needs no food, and only drinks wine, the goddess Idhunn has certain apples entrusted to her care, by eating of which the aging gods make them-

selves young again.* We are here reminded of the apples of the Hesperides. As to the wine of the gods, it must have been like the nectar of the Greek gods. In spite of the rejuvenating apples, the gods were considered as influenced by the encroachments of age: there are some young and some old gods. Wotan is always represented as an old graybeard, Thor as in the full strength of manhood, Balder as a blooming youth. In like manner Uranos and Kronos appear old; Zeus (like our Thor or Donar) and Poseidon as middle-aged; Apollo, Hermes, and Ares as in the bloom of youth. Growth and age, the increase and decline of power, exclude the notion of a strictly eternal, immutable, immortal being; and death to gods of such attributes is, however long delayed, inevitable.

In the Teutonic and the Greek mythology no monstrous deformity of many heads, arms, or legs is ascribed to the gods, except in the case of some Greek giants called *έκατόγχειρες*,† and in that of a four-armed Lacedæmonian Apollo. Yet Wotan is one-eyed, and Hödhr blind. Hel alone has a dreadful shape, black and white; the rest of the gods and goddesses, not excepting Loki, are to be imagined as of a beautiful and noble figure. The form of the gods and goddesses is like the human, only huger and mightier, and their gait is swifter. Their riding and driving, whether through the air or in the water, is so vehement that the din of the elements is explained by it. The driving of Thor arouses thunder in the clouds, and the rage and writhing of gods like Loki, who were bound, produces earthquakes and other terrible phenomena.

* See the apples of Freyja in the Rheingold, page 88.

† See also page 23, line 26.

We have now drawn nigh the atmosphere which pervades the mythic Teutonic world. Yet in order to survey and understand the whole ground of events in the "Ring of the Nibelung" we must devote some attention to other mythological facts and persons.

CHAPTER II.

GIANTS; DWARFS; WATER-SPRITES; NORNS; VALKYRS—VALHALL—TEUTONIC COSMOGONY.

IN the statements just given concerning the gods and goddesses, frequent mention has necessarily been made of the giants. A brief account of the latter, and of their relation to the gods, men, and dwarfs, will be sufficient in this place. At the outset an important point may be stated, as it is evident that the idea of the overthrow of the gods was already suggested by the Teutonic conception of the creation of the world. The gods were considered as descended from the giants, that is, from an evil source; and moreover, that which can be born must also die. An elf or dwarf is as much below the human size as a giant towers above it. Man rejoices in the happy mean, and is able to conquer the giants' rude force and outwit the dwarfs' cunning and slyness. Untamed natural force, which defies gods and men in its consciousness of power, is the characteristic of giants. Hence their intractableness; and from the latter there is but one easy step to stupidity, by which they are generally, but not always, distinguished. "Yet the Norse lays contain one feature favorable to the giants. They stand as specimens of a fallen or falling race, which with the strength combines also the innocence and wisdom of the old world—an intelligence

that is objective and imparted at creation rather than self-acquired. This half-regretful view of giants prevails particularly in one of the finest poems of the Edda, the *Hymisgvíðha*. . . . When the verb *threya*, usually meaning to wish, is employed as characteristic of giants, it seems to imply a dreamy brooding, a half-drunken complacency and immobility. Such a being when at rest is good-humored, but becomes wild, spiteful, and violent when provoked. Norse legend names this rage of giants *jötunmôdhr*, which puts itself in defiance against *âsmôdhr*, the rage of the gods. When their wrath is kindled, the giants hurl boulders, rub stones till they catch fire, and squeeze water out of rocks. . . . Their relation to gods and men is by turns friendly and hostile. Jötunheim (the home of the giants) lies far from Asaheim (the home of the gods), yet visits are paid on both sides. It is in this connection that they sometimes leave on us the impression of older nature-gods who had to give way to a younger and higher race; it is only natural, therefore, that in certain giants, like Ecke and Fasolt, we should recognize a precipitate of deity. At other times a rebellious spirit breaks forth: they make war upon the gods like the heaven-scaling Titans, and the gods hurl them down like devils into hell. Yet there are some gods married to giantesses. . . . Among the Aesir gods the great foe of giants is Thor, who like Jupiter inflicts on them his thunder-wounds; his hammer has crushed many: were it not for Thor, says a Scandinavian proverb, the giants would get the upper hand. . . . The kings Niblung and Schilbung had twelve strong giants for friends (Nib. Lied), or vassals, as the Norse kings

often had twelve *berserks*. But like the primal woods and monstrous beasts of the olden time, the giants get gradually extirpated off the face of the earth, and with all heroes giant-fighting alternates with dragon-fighting."

According to tradition, giants dwelt on rocks and mountains ; stones and rocks were their weapons ; they had no swords, only stone clubs and shields. In later legends they are armed with steel bars and iron clubs. In the Edda wonderful things are related of the giant Skrymir, in the thumb of whose glove the god Thor took a night's lodging. Skrymir goes to sleep under an oak, and snores. When Thor with his hammer strikes him on the head, he wakes up and asks if a leaf had fallen on him. The giant lies down under another oak, and snores so that the forest roars ; Thor hits him a harder blow than before, and the giant, awaking, cries, "Did an acorn fall on my face?" He falls asleep a third time, and Thor repeats his blow, making a yet deeper dent ; but the giant merely strokes his cheek and remarks, "There must be birds roosting in those boughs ; I fancied, when I awoke, they dropped something on my head."

The one eye of the Greek Cyclops is not ascribed to the Teutonic giants ; yet like the Cyclops they are at times represented with many hands and heads. The forging of weapons is attributed to the dwarfs, and in this respect the giants differ also from the Greek Cyclops. It seems from some traditions that giants, like dwarfs, had reason to dread the daylight, and if surprised by the break of day they were turned into stone. "Grotesque, humanlike shapes assumed by stalactite,

flint, and flakestone on the small scale, and by basalt and granite rocks on the great, have largely engendered and fed these fancies about petrified giants. . . . Just as the elves found the spread of agriculture and the clearing of their forests an abomination which compelled them to move out, so the giants regard the wood as their own property, in which they are by no means disposed to let men do as they please. . . . And no less do giants (like dwarfs) hate the ringing of bells, as in the Swedish tale of the old giant in the mountain (Afzelius, 3. 88); therefore they sling rocks at the belfries." The Teutonic giants are not represented as a race of cannibals, like the Greek and Oriental giants: they conform more to human ideas, and their savagery spends itself chiefly in hurling huge stones, removing mountains, and rearing colossal buildings.

The elves, or dwarfs, were imagined to be small, some even tiny; their height is sometimes distinctly stated: now they reach the stature of a four-year-old child, again they appear so diminutive as to be measured by a span or the thumb. The light elves are well-shaped and symmetrical; the black, ugly and deformed. The elves, or dwarfs, are ruled by a king or queen. The old French fable of Huon of Bordeaux mentions King Oberon, that is, Auberon or Alberon, an *alb*, or *elf*. In "*Otnit küneç*" (king), Alberich (Elberich) plays a prominent part; in the Nibelungen Lied he is a vassal of the kings Nibelung and Schilbung. Human heroes after conquering the king of the elves obtain supreme power over the race of the defeated ruler. In this sense Siegfried in the Nibelungen Lied, after subduing Alberich, may be considered the chief of the

conquered people. As elvish beings, the dwarfs are naturally the collectors and custodians of subterranean treasures. They forge curiously-wrought weapons in their caves, and by slipping into cracks and crevices of the hills suddenly vanish from sight. Entrances into mountains of dwarfs are found as into enchanted regions, by gods, heroes, and men. The elves are often considered as good-natured beings, kindly disposed towards men when allowed by them to pursue the even tenor of their way. Indeed, they are helpful to mankind in the way of smith-work, weaving, and baking. In their turn they also need at times the assistance of men, especially in dividing treasure.

All elves are irresistibly fond of music and dancing. By night they dance on the moonlit meadows, and at dawn their tracks are seen in the dew. When their sweet singing is heard on summer nights from their hills, one may listen to them, or, as the ballads say, lay his ear to the elf-hill; but no one should be so cruel as by the slightest word to destroy their hopes of salvation, for then the spritely music will be turned into weeping and lamentation. Being intimately acquainted with the secret powers of nature, the elves and dwarfs enjoy remarkable longevity. On the whole, they seem to avoid the company of men, and give the impression of an injured and conquered race, on the point of yielding to new and more powerful invaders. Since the elf requires at times the aid of man, and knows that he is intellectually superior to him, there arises the idea of hostility between the two. Both the black and the white elves have the power of rendering themselves invisible, either by a magic hat or cloak, called some-

times Nebelkappe or Tarnkappe. This is particularly significant in the Nibelung stories.* From this power of making themselves invisible, and the love of teasing mankind, generally attributed to them, popular belief soon connected them with all sorts of malicious deception and trickery, and, especially in later times, retained only the hateful side of their nature. Like the giants, all dwarfs and elves were considered thievish, and were supposed to steal well-shaped children from the cradle and substitute their own ugly ones, or even themselves.

What is related of the doings of elves and dwarfs in mountain-caves as to sunken or concealed treasures is also ascribed to other mythological beings. What the elves make, possess, or obtain in one case, the water-sprites get hold of in the other. *In the bosom of the Rhine lie treasure and gold. The Nibelungs' hoard lies sunk in the Rhine.* Wise women, valkyrs, appear on the waves as swans, and are merged into prophetic mermaids.† The water-man is generally pictured as old and with a long beard; he wears a green hat, and when he grins you can see his green teeth. The nixe, or mermaid, is represented as partially emerging from the waves, and with the upper half of her body of dazzling beauty. She sits in the sun and combs her long hair. The idea of a fish-like tail, as in the case of sirens, seems not to be truly Teutonic; on the contrary, the female water-sprite, nixe, or mermaid, when she appears on shore, is formed and clad like the daughters of men, being recognized only by her wet skirt. All water-sprites, like the elves, delight in song, music, and danc-

* See pages 96, 102, 206 and 219.

† See the beginning of the "Rheingold," pages 81 and 82.

ing. Well known is the common superstition that they, like the sirens, attract the listeners to themselves and lure them into the deep. According to early Norse tradition, drowned men went to the goddess Rân; in later times they were believed to belong to the water-sprites. The latter, however, were not supposed to kill those who went to the bottom, but to bear them gently to their abode, and harbor their souls.

The damsels of the lake, according to the tradition, appear at evening among men, take part in the dance, and visit their lovers. "In Sweden an alluring and enchanting strain of music was ascribed to the river-sprites. It had eleven variations, but men might dance to only ten of them; the eleventh belonged to the spirit of the night. When it was played, tables and benches, pots and pans, graybeards and grandmothers, the blind and the lame, even babes in the cradle, began to dance." In the Swedish superstition, the water-sprite requires the sacrifice of a black lamb before it will teach any one to play the harp. "Although Christianity forbids such offerings, and pronounces the old water-sprites diabolic beings, yet the common people retain a certain awe and reverence, and have not quite given up all faith in their power and influence: accursed beings they are, but they may some day become partakers of salvation. This is the drift of the touching account of the *strömkarl*, or *neck* (water-sprite), who desires one not only to sacrifice to him in return for musical instruction, but to promise him resurrection and redemption. Two boys were playing by the river-side; the neck sat there touching his harp, and the children cried to him: 'What do you sit and play here for, neck? You know you will

never be saved.' The neck began to weep bitterly, threw his harp away, and sank to the bottom. When the boys got home, they told their father what had happened. The father, who was a priest, said: 'You have sinned against the neck; go back, comfort him, and tell him he may be saved.' When they returned to the river, the neck sat on the bank weeping and wailing. The children said: 'Do not cry so, poor neck; father says your Redeemer liveth too.' Then the neck joyfully took his harp and played charmingly till after sunset. I do not know that anywhere in our legends it is so pointedly expressed how badly the heathen stand in need of the Christian religion, and how mildly it ought to meet them."

From time immemorial the Teutonic nations paid great deference to woman, and the decrees of fate seemed to be more hallowed when heard from her lips. Soothsaying and sorcery were particularly a woman's gift, and amiable or awful half-goddesses mediated between mankind and the deity. Tacitus bears testimony to the high respect in which women were held by the Teutonic race. The honor shown to them in the chivalric period of the middle ages is evident from the contents of the *Minnelieder*. The formula *durch aller vrouwen ére* ("by all women's honor") occurs both in court-poems and folk-songs. The hero in stress of battle thought of his love, uttered her name, and thereby increased his strength. When Drusus with his Roman legions arrived near the river Elbe, a woman of gigantic stature met him in the land of the Cheruscans, forbade his farther advance, and foretold his early death.

The norns, or goddesses of fate, the weird sisters, were *Urd*, *Verdande* and *Skuld*, corresponding to our Past, Present and Future, or what has been, what is, and what is to be. They ruled the fate of the world, and allotted to every man his term of life. *Urdharr-brunnr* was the name of the fountain at the sacred ash-tree, named after Urd; beside it stood the hall of the three norns. They were present at the birth of every child, and pronounced his doom. From the relation of Helgi's birth in the Edda, we see that the norns entered the castle at night, spun for the hero the threads of his fate, and stretched the golden cord in the midst of heaven; the region between the eastern and western ends of the line fell to the hero's lot. A kind disposition is often ascribed to the first two norns, an evil one to the third. The latter is at times called "the youngest;" therefore they were of different ages, Urd being the eldest. In the Edda it is distinctly stated that there are good and bad norns; and although only three are named, there must have been more of them. In the later fairy stories there usually appear three fays, but sometimes seven and even thirteen are mentioned. It is a very common characteristic in these tales that the good luck promised by some norns or fays is partly or altogether neutralized by an offended one. An instance of this fact is found in the Nornagestsaga. One day the norns came to Nornagest's father; the babe lay in the cradle, and two tapers were burning over him. When the first two norns had gifted him and assured him of happiness beyond all others of his race, the third or youngest norn, who in

the crowd had been pushed off her seat and fallen to the ground, rose up in anger and cried, “ I decree that the child shall live only till the lighted taper beside him has burnt out.” The eldest norn quickly seized the taper, put it out, and gave it to the mother with the warning not to kindle it again till the last day of her son’s life. Well known is the story of the Sleeping Beauty (*Dornröschen*) and the twelve wise women : the thirteenth had been overlooked, and revenged herself. There is a great number of fairy tales of the same description. In the Norse traditions, Urd, the eldest-norn, seems to be the mightiest ; while in Greek mythology, Atropos, the fate of the future, who cuts the thread, appears to be the most powerful.

The norns are represented as sitting on chairs or roaming through the country among men, fastening their threads. The valkyrs ride to war ; the issue of the battle is decided by them, and they conduct the fallen heroes to Valhall. The name valkyr means chooser of the slain. The Old Norse *valr*, Anglo-Saxon *wael*, Old High German *wal* signifies the slaughter on the battle-field. *Kür* denotes choosing : *siges kür*, choosing of the victory ; to own the *val*, or the slain heroes, to lead them to Wotan’s hall, was named *kiosan*—German *küren*, to choose. But the valkyrs also take charge of heroes while alive, and protect them until death : they are guardian angels and death angels. Wotan is served in Valhall by these half-divine maidens, and at his command they go forth into every battle to choose the slain. Another name of the valkyrs is, in Old Norse, *valmeyjar*, or battle-maids ; they are also called *skiald-*

meyjar, or shield-maidens, and hialmmeyjar, or helmet-maidens, since they ride forth armed, under shield and helmet. They are also sometimes termed ôskmeyjar, or wish-maidens; they are in Wotan's service, and Wotan is called Oska (*Wunsc*, wish), the god of wishing, the divine wish. In Valhall the valkyrs handed the drinking-horn to the gods and heroes. They longed for battle, and not only chose the heroes that were to be slain, but decided the victory. Nine valkyrs ride out together; their lances, helmets, and shields glitter. The steeds shake themselves, whereupon dew drips from their manes into the valleys. The valkyrs, like Wotan, are accompanied by eagles and ravens who alight on the battle-field. Most of the valkyrs were supposed to be mortal maidens of kingly race, deified women or descended from the gods. It seems probable that the obligation of virginity was imposed on the valkyrs, since Wotan decreed that *Brunhild, for disobeying his will, should cease to be a valkyr and should be given in marriage.* Yet some of the valkyrs were abducted by men against their will, while others were the lovers of heroes. There was some affinity between norns and valkyrs: Skuld, the youngest of the norns, was also a valkyr. There is, moreover, a tale of three valkyrs who sat on the sea-beach spinning costly flax. Thus valkyrs as well as norns were at times imagined spinning and weaving. Yet the chief office and distinctive feature of the valkyrs was the award of victory, and their greatest pleasure was the excitement of war and the clash of arms. Wotan and Freyja summoned to their abode all those who fell in battle.

The account of the valkyrs which we have just given

leads us to a consideration of Valhall, the hall of the slain heroes, where they abide after death. When the gods had set in order heaven and earth, they erected for themselves a dwelling in the centre of the universe. It was called Asgard, the home of the gods or, more distinctively, of the Aesir. It contained many mansions, but none of them was so famous as Valhall. It was covered with shields, and had five hundred and forty doors, each affording passage to eight hundred heroes at once. Wotan has the beautiful name of *Valfödhr*, *Valfather*; and the heroes admitted to Valhall are called *einherjar*, the only (*ein*), or great, champions. In the midst of Valhall stood a mighty tree the foliage of which was cropped by a she-goat, whoseudder yielded a barrelful of mead a day—enough to nourish all the einherjes. All heroes aspired to admission to Valhall; the cowards and evil-doers were excluded from it. It appears, however, that the virtuous, even though they had died a natural death, found an abode in Valhall or in one of the other heavenly mansions. The idea seemed to prevail that virtue, and not valor alone, was entitled to recompense in another life, and that wickedness and vice, although allied with personal bravery, were to be punished. The reception of departed heroes in Valhall is vividly pictured in sagas. Valhall may be compared to the Greek Elysium in the far west, in the happy isles of Okeanos.

As the whole atmosphere surrounding and pervading Wagner's "Ring of the Nibelung" is entirely mythical, and as, consequently, acquaintance with an outline of Teutonic mythology is necessary for the full com-

prehension of the great drama, we have referred to the gods, goddesses, giants, dwarfs, river-maidens, norns, and valkyrs. The account would be incomplete without some statements concerning the views of the ancient Teutonic race on the creation of the world, or cosmogony. On the other hand, since both in Teutonic mythology and in Wagner's poem such an important part is played by the advent of the *Götterdämmerung*, or destruction of the world, it is evident that first an account of its creation should be given.

In the beginning there was an immense chasm called *ginnunga gap*, or chasm of chasms, answering in meaning to the Greek chaos. "There were two extremities of the chasm, opposed to one another; far to the north was *Niflheim*, the nebulous world, and far to the south *Muspelheim*, the fire-world. From the latter came light and warmth, from Niflheim darkness and deadly cold. In the middle was a fountain out of which flowed twelve rivers. When they got so far from their source that the drop of fire contained in them hardened, like the sparks that fly out of flame, they turned into rigid ice. Touched by the mild air of the south, the ice began to thaw and trickle; by the power of him who sent the heat, the drops quickened into life, and a man grew out of them, *Ymir* (called *Orgelmir* by the *Hrim-thurses*), a giant and evil of nature. Ymir went to sleep and fell into a sweat; then under his left hand grew man and wife, and one of his feet engendered with the other a six-headed son; hence are sprung the families of giants. But the ice dripped on, and a cow arose, *Audhumbla*, from whose udder flowed four streams of milk, conveying nourishment to Ymir. Then the cow

licked the salty ice-rocks; and on the evening of the first day a man's hand came forth, on the second the man's head, and on the third day the whole man emerged. He was beautiful, large, and strong; his name was Buri, and his son's name Börr. Börr took to him Bestla, the giant Bölmhorn's daughter, and begat three sons, Odhinn (Wotan), Vili, and Ve; and by them was the giant Ymir slain."

When the giant Ymir fell, there flowed so much blood out of his wounds, that all the race of the frost-giants was drowned in it, save one, who escaped with his wife. From them came a new race of frost-giants. The sons of Börr dragged the dead Ymir's body into the middle of *ginnunga gap*, and created out of his blood the sea and water, of his flesh the earth, of his bones the mountains, of his teeth and broken bones the rocks and crags. Then they took his skull and made of it the sky; and the sparks from Muspelheim, that floated about free, they fixed in the sky so as to give light to all. The earth was round and encircled by a deep sea, on whose shore the giants were to dwell; but to guard the inland parts of the earth against them, there was built of Ymir's brows a castle, Midgard. The giant's brain was thrown into the air and formed the clouds.

When all this was done, the sons of Börr went to the seashore and found two trees, out of which they created two human beings; the man they called Ask, and the woman Embla. To these Wotan gave soul and life, Vili wit and feeling, Ve countenance, speech, hearing and sight. According to another account the gods were Wotan, Hoenir and Loder. The newly created pair received from the gods Midgard as their

abode, and from them is descended the whole human family.

As to the creation of dwarfs, the traditions do not agree ; according to one account they came forth as worms in the proto-giant's (Ymir's) flesh, and were then endowed by the gods with understanding and human shape ; in earlier myths they were created out of the flesh and bones of another giant. Both accounts refer only to the black elves. According to the Edda, in the order of creation there came, first the giants, next the gods, and then after an intervening deluge, caused by the blood flowing from the wounds of Ymir, men and dwarfs. Only men and dwarfs can therefore be regarded as being really created ; the giants and gods came, as it were, spontaneously out of chaos. "In the *āses* (Aesir, gods) we see a superior and successful second product in contrast with the first half-bungled giant affair. On the giants an undue portion of inert matter had been expended ; in the *āses* body and soul attained a perfect equilibrium, and together with infinite strength and beauty was evolved an informing and creative mind. To men belongs a less full yet a fair measure of both qualities ; while dwarfs, as the end of creation, form the antithesis to giants, since mind in them outweighs the puny body."

One of the finest conceptions of Norse cosmogony is *Ygdrasil*, the world-tree, of all trees the greatest and holiest. It is an ash-tree, whose branches shoot through all the world and reach beyond heaven. It has three mighty roots ; one of them extends to the gods in Asgard, another to the giants, the third stands over Niflheim. From each root gushes a miraculous

fountain: from the heaven root *Urdharbrunnr*; from the giants' root *Mimisbrunnr*; from the under-world *Hvergelmir*, i.e. the roaring caldron. All these fountains or well-springs were considered sacred. At the Urdhar well the gods sat in judgment, and there they and the norns held their councils. The giants' well was guarded by Mîmir, and in it wisdom was concealed; the snake Nidhhöggr lay below Hvergelmir, gnawing at the root of the tree. The norns every day draw water from the Urdhar-fount, and with it and the clay that lies around the fount they sprinkle the ash-tree so that the boughs may continue green and not wither away. So holy is this spring that it imparts to everything placed in it the color of the white of an egg. From the tree there trickles a dew, called *hunângsfall*, fall of honey, and it is the food of bees.

In the beginning Allfather (Wotan) appointed rulers, and bade them judge with him the destinies of mankind. The gods dwelled in Asgard. There were twelve seats for them beside the throne which was occupied by Allfather. The most renowned deities were Wotan, Thor, Balder, Heimdal, Loki, Frey; Frigg, Freyja and Erda. Njörd with his children Frey and Freyja originally belonged to the Vanir, or sea-gods, who were received among the Aesir by virtue of a treaty.

There was a golden age of the gods, and it lasted until the arrival of three women from Jötunheim, three so-called giantesses, who brought misfortune with them. The three maidens are regarded as being the daughters of Erda, the earth. Erda at the same time represents that primeval world of waters from which

later the earth arose. In this sense the maidens were divinities of the Vanir race; again they are identified with the norns. The arrival of the norns among the Aesir gods was supposed to denote the end of the golden age. Fate and guilt were considered as inseparably connected. *The pure gold symbolizes innocence*; in the beginning the gods (Aesir), as well as the Vanir, deemed it merely a thing to play with. From the admission of the Vanir into the company of the Aesir came the source of all evil. The former brought the gold with them from its pure abode at the bottom of the water, and the Aesir desecrated it for selfish purposes through the instrumentality of the dwarfs. Hence arose the danger to the gods; the curse rested on the gold from the time it was taken from its bed in the innocent deep.

"The unrighteous acquisition of gold, wealth and power is the cause of guilt and sin, and with its disastrous consequences leads to the destruction of the world. The German Götterdämmerung and the Norse Ragnarok have the same meaning: *ragna* from *regin*, god, and *rök*, darkness, i.e. twilight, darkening of time and the gods, and with it final destruction. It was proclaimed by prophetesses, and was foreshadowed by the death of Balder and by other events. The growing depravity and strife in the world announced also its coming. Then the evil beings, long held in check and under spell, break loose and war against the gods. The Fenris-wolf devours the sun, another the moon. The stars are hurled from the heavens, the earth shakes so violently that trees are torn up by the roots, the tottering mountains tumble headlong from their found-

ations. The monstrous world-snake Jörmungandhr, writhing in giant rage, rises out of the waters on to the land, the sea rushes over the earth, the Fenris-wolf is set free. On the waters floats the ship Naglfar (nail-ship), constructed out of dead men's nails. The Fenris-wolf advances and opens his enormous mouth; the lower jaw reaches to the earth, and the upper one to heaven. Fire flashes from his eyes and nostrils. The Midgard serpent Jörmungandhr, placing himself by the side of the Fenris-wolf, vomits forth floods of poison which fill the air and the waters. Amidst these devastations the heavens are rent in twain; and the sons of Muspel come riding through the opening in brilliant array. Surt rides first, and behind him follows a glittering host; it is from this flame-world that the gods have most danger to dread. They ride over *Rifröst*, the rainbow, in such a strength that they break it down. Then they direct their course to the battle-field called *Vigrid*. Thither repair also the Fenris-wolf and the Midgard serpent, and Loki with all the followers of Hel, and Hrym with all the frost-giants. But the sons of Muspel keep their effulgent bands apart on the battle-field, which is one hundred miles on each side."

Meanwhile Heimdal arises, and with all his strength he blows the *Gjallarhorn* to arouse the gods, who assemble without delay. Wotan then rides to Mimir's fountain, to consult how he and his warriors are to enter into action. The ash Ygdrasil begins to quiver; nor is there anything in heaven or on earth that does not fear and tremble in that hour. The gods and all the *einherjes* of Valhall arm themselves with speed and

sally forth to the field, led on by Wotan with his golden helmet, resplendent cuirass, and spear called *Gungner*. Wotan pits himself against the Fenris-wolf. Thor stands by his side, but can render him no assistance, having himself to combat the Midgard serpent. Frey encounters Surt, and terrible blows are exchanged ere Frey falls ; and he owes his defeat to his not having the trusty sword which he gave to Skirner. Loki and Heimdal fight and kill each other. The god Tyr is killed by the hugest of all hounds, Garmr. Thor gains great renown for killing the Midgard serpent, but at the same time, retreating nine paces, he falls dead upon the spot, suffocated with the floods of venom which the dying serpent vomits forth upon him. The wolf swallows Wotan ; but at that instant Vidar advances, and setting his foot upon the monster's lower jaw, he seizes the other with his hand, and thus tears and rends him till he dies. At the end Surt flings fire and flame over the world. Smoke wreathes around the all-nourishing tree Ygdrasil, the high flames play against the heavens, and earth, consumed, sinks down beneath the sea. After the world-conflagration a new and happier earth rises out of the sea, with gods rejuvenated. The destruction of the world by water is in all mythologies regarded as past ; that by fire is looked forward to as future.

CHAPTER III.

THE TRADITIONS OF THE NIBELUNG MYTH.

As has been stated, there exist several versions in which the Nibelung story has been transmitted to us. Some of them have been preserved in Iceland, others in Germany. During the despotic reign of King Harold Hârfager (Fair-hair) in Norway, the flower of the Norwegian race began to emigrate to Iceland. They took with them the best of the ancient culture of their home, the spirit of freedom, the love of song and poetry, and all those characteristics which were common to the whole Teutonic race. They religiously preserved the early traditions of their forefathers; a task which, however, was much easier for them to accomplish than for the kindred nations. In Iceland, Christianity was introduced at a comparatively late epoch—at the beginning of the eleventh century. It was preached by native priests, who did not desire to eradicate every vestige of the ancient customs; a proceeding very different from the manner in which Christianity was introduced into Germany. Among the Icelandic poems and sagas the following should be mentioned here:

(I) The Elder Edda,* or Saemund's Edda. It consists

* The Nibelung traditions given in the following pages are mostly taken from the two Eddas, and from the "Story of the Volsungs and Nibelungs," by E. Magnusson and W. Morris.

of a series of lays more or less independent of each other. They naturally divide themselves into two sections, a mythic and an heroic—into poems referring to the ancient gods, and poems treating of the heroes of antiquity. The old parchment (*Codex regius*) of the Elder Edda seems to have been written about the year 1300, and was sent to Denmark in the middle of the seventeenth century as a present from the Icelandic bishop Brynjolf Sveinsson to King Frederick the Third. Unfortunately there are several pages wanting in this manuscript; they contained a very important part of the life of Siegfried (*Sigurd*)—that from his first meeting with Brunhild to his death—and their contents can only be inferred from the *Volsunga Saga*, to be presently described. When we consider the Elder Edda in connection with the poetry of Germany, it appears that the Edda literature in its nature and origin belongs to the whole Teutonic race. The Edda poetry has, on the whole, retained in the north a more original character, while at the same time it has in some instances assumed a specifically Norse garb. The Edda poems in the form in which they have been handed down to us belong mostly to the eighth century; yet they originated in a prehistoric time, when no difference had as yet been developed between Scandinavians and Germans.

(2) The Younger Edda, or Snorre's Edda as it is also called, because its authorship has been ascribed to Snorre Sturlason (born 1178, died 1241), is a work composed at different times by different persons. It forms a collection of narratives in prose, and has been very appropriately called by Prof. R. B. Anderson* a sort

* *The Younger Edda*, translated by R. B. Anderson. Chicago, 1879.

of commentary on the Elder Edda. In its first part it contains a general synopsis of the ancient faith of the Norse people; in its second the art of poetry is described.

(3) Among the mytho-heroic sagas the Volsunga Saga is the most important. It is partly a paraphrase in prose of the songs of the Elder Edda, and was probably collected during the twelfth century. "The whole middle portion of the saga is a transposing of the poems which relate to the Volsungs, and the opening chapters are also clearly based on very ancient songs which are now lost, while the last chapters are unmistakably a later addition to the original cycle of poems. . . . Viewed as a whole, the transposing is faithfully done, and the impression we get from those parts of which we possess only the prosaic paraphrase is uniformly the same as that which we get from those passages of which the original poems are preserved. . . . The Volsunga Saga is particularly interesting from the fact that it illustrates how the original and ancient nucleus of the saga in the course of time has received various additions, other traditions having become united with the Volsung legends. A remarkable example of this is the expansion which the Sigurd (Siegfried) traditions have received by becoming united with the traditions relating to the Viking king, Ragnar Lodbrok, the latter's wife, Aslaug, being represented as a daughter of Sigurd and Brynhild. This is a striking illustration of the tendency quite common among the ancients to connect the most prominent families with kings and heroes of the heroic age." *

* History of the Literature of the Scandinavian North, by F. W. Horn, translated by R. B. Anderson (Chicago, 1884), page 64.

(4) The Thidrek Saga (of Dietrich von Bern), or Vil-kina Saga, including the Niflunga Saga, collected towards the middle of the thirteenth century, was composed from the saga-lore of Germany, or was to a great extent at least, as is repeatedly stated by its author. This saga bears the impress of later romantic tales in some of its parts, especially in the account of Siegfried's birth; while other portions, based on old Saxon songs and tales, agree with the Edda and Volsunga Saga; others again are derived from later German lays, and agree in many points with the Nibelungen Lied, particularly with its second part.

(5) The Nornagestsaga of the fourteenth century is based on the songs of the Elder Edda, and is a curious blending of history and myth. Nornagest * lived three hundred years, and related as an eye-witness Sigurd's (Siegfried's) deeds and death, and other incidents of the Nibelung story, to King Olaf Trygvason. He was then baptized, lighted the taper at the king's command, and died.

In addition to the Icelandic poems and sagas, the old Danish folk-lore (from the fourteenth century to the sixteenth) may also be mentioned. It contains songs belonging to the Nibelung subject, either based on the ancient northern traditions, or related to the second part of the Nibelungen Lied. In the lonely isles of Faroe the old saga has so deeply penetrated the heart of the people that the songs of Brunhild resound there even at the present day.

Among the Nibelung traditions of Germany the Nibelungen Lied takes the foremost rank. It is the

* See page 29.

greatest poem of mediæval Germany. Composed during the end of the twelfth century, it is imbued with the spirit of feudalism and Christianity. The idea of the original lays of the Nibelungs appears partly, but not altogether, clouded; yet despite this fact, the poem is of such beauty and grandeur that its place among the greatest epics of the world is undisputed. As we shall see hereafter, Richard Wagner took the fundamental facts for the literary composition of his "Ring of the Nibelung" mostly from the earlier traditions, and consequently consulted chiefly the poems and sagas of the Nibelungs as transmitted to us by the Scandinavian north. Thus the Nibelungen Lied was not a direct source of his work. Besides, the "Ring of the Nibelung" ends with the death of Siegfried and Brunhild, while in the Nibelungen Lied Brunhild survives Siegfried, sinks after his death into insignificance, and Kriemhild (the northern Gudrun) plays the most prominent part in the epic, especially in its second half, which might be called Kriemhild's Revenge. In the sketch of the Nibelung story to be given farther on we shall, therefore, have little occasion to refer to the Nibelungen Lied; the reader who desires fuller information concerning that marvellous poem may consult Auber Forestier's charming prose version, or the author's "Great Epics of Mediæval Germany."

The Lay of Siegfried the Horny-skinned (*Das Lied vom Hörnen Seyfried*) belongs, from its versification, to the thirteenth century, and, from its language, to the fifteenth. This work, preserved only in printed editions of the sixteenth century, is an agglomeration of several ancient songs which originally had no rela-

tion to each other, and consequently it contains some contradictions; still it shows even in its present shape many traces of great antiquity.

The works named above are the most important ones in which the Nibelung myths and sagas have been handed down to us. In the following pages, as far as possible only such facts and events will be sketched as form the basis of Wagner's "Ring of the Nibelung." The great poet and composer at times arranged the material of his sources without any great modification of their contents, while now and then they underwent a more striking transformation at his hands. Yet even in the latter case the principal ideas and facts of the myth remained the type, or model, of his creation. As has been said before, the spirit of the myth has been wonderfully grasped by the master, and the idea of its unity brought out in a harmonious form. This fact must be borne in mind so much the more, as there is not a single tradition extant in which the original Nibelung story has been preserved complete and in its entire purity. It is only by comparing the several versions with each other, and submitting each and all of them to a critical examination, that the primitive character of the myth can be fully detected.

Among the heroes who had been selected by Wotan to strengthen the power of the gods, to enter Valhall, and as einherjes* to take part with him in the last combat, none were more renowned than those of the race of the Volsungs. According to the Volsunga Saga, Sigi was the son of Wotan. On account of a murder which he had committed he fled, or, in the

* See page 32.

words of the saga, he was considered "a wolf in holy places"—that is, he was banished.

Thus at the very beginning of the history of this race a deed is recorded which throws a gloomy shadow on the son of Wotan. "Sigi, by the aid of Wotan, conquered the land of the Huns, that is, of the giants. Sigi's son was Rerir, a mighty warrior who obtained the land and kingdom of his father. The son of Rerir was Välse;* he married the daughter of a giant. They had ten sons and one daughter; and their eldest son was hight Sigmund, and their daughter Signy,† and these two were twins, and in all wise the foremost and fairest of the children of King Välse; even as has been long told from ancient days, and in tales of long ago, with the greatest fame of all men, how that the Volsungs have been great men, and high-minded, and far above the most of men both in cunning and in prowess. So says the story that King Välse let build a noble hall in such a wise that a big oak-tree stood therein, and that the limbs of the tree blossomed fair out over the roof of the hall, while below stood the trunk within it.

"Soon there appeared a suitor for Signy, and, although the maiden had little love for him, she was betrothed to King Siggeir at her father's command. As the men sat by the fires in the evening of the wedding-day, a certain man came into the hall, unknown of aspect to

* In the Volsunga Saga he is called Volsung. This is an error. His proper name is Välse, and that of his son is Välsing (Volsung). In the Anglo-Saxon poem Beowulf the names Välse and Välsing (1787 and 1747) are correctly applied. It is evident that the name Volsung cannot refer to the son of Rerir, but only to the son of Välse.

† Sieglinde in Wagner.

all men; he wore a spotted cloak, and he had a sword in his hand as he went up to the tree, and a slouched hat upon his head; huge he was; he seemed old and one-eyed. He drew his sword and smote it into the tree-trunk, so that it sank in up to the hilt; and all held back from greeting the man. Then he said: 'Whosoever draweth this sword from this trunk shall have the same as a gift from me, and shall find it in good sooth that never bare he better sword in hand than is this.' The old man went from the hall, and none knew who he was, or whither he went. All the noblest men tried to pull the sword out of the tree, but none of them could do it. At last there came Sig-mund, the son of Välse; he seized the sword by its hilt, and drew it from the tree-trunk, even as if it lay loose before him."

In vain Siggeir offered for the weapon thrice its weight of gold; Sigmund kept what the god had bestowed on him. Siggeir, wrathful at the refusal, left the country with his sorrowing wife, after bidding Välse, his sons and followers, come and see him in his kingdom after three months had passed. There with treacherous intent Siggeir fell on them; Välse and all his men were slain; his sons were captured and most cruelly killed, save Sigmund, who by Signy's help escaped. Then Sigmund dwelt in the woods like a wolf among the wolves, while King Siggeir deemed that all the Volsungs were dead. Signy, fearing that the race of the Volsungs might become extinct, changed semblance with a witch-wife, went to Sigmund, and abode with him three nights. Their son, a true Vol-sung, was called Sinfjölti. Sigmund brought him up in

fierce hardihood, so that he might be inured to fatigue, and brave enough to revenge the death of Välse. Father and son roamed through the woods in the guise of wolves, and accomplished many valiant deeds. At last, at Signy's behest, they avenged the death of her father and brothers on King Siggeir by setting fire to the royal hall. They promised great honors to Signy, but she answered to Sigmund: "I went into the woods to thee in a witch-wife's shape, and Sinfjötli is the son of thee and me both; and therefore has he this great hardihood and fierceness, because he is the son both of Välse's son and Välse's daughter. For naught else have I so wrought that King Siggeir might get his bane at last; and merrily now will I die with the king, though I was naught merry to wed him." Thereupon she kissed Sigmund and Sinfjötli, went back into the fire, and died with the king and all his men.

Sigmund returned to his father's land, took charge of his hereditary realm, and became a king, mighty and far-famed. He married Borghild, and had a son by her named Helgi, who afterwards achieved great renown among the heroes of his time. The two songs of Helgi in the Elder Edda are among the noblest contributions ever made to the literature of ancient Scandinavia. In this place we can only briefly refer to Helgi. He slew Hunding in battle, and was thence called Hundingsbani, the slayer of Hunding. Hunding had been in deadly feud with Sigmund, and probably taken possession of Välse's kingdom after Siggeir's death. The valkyr Sigrun protected in battle Helgi, the son of Sigmund, against her father's wish. She loved and married Helgi, but hated the man whom her father had sought to force on her as her husband.

Sinfjötli died of poison given to him by his step-mother Borghild, whom Sigmund therefore drove away ; Helgi fell in strife with Sigrun's brother. Helgi and Sinfjötli, though both great heroic figures, must quit the scene to make way for the grandest of the Vol-sungs, Siegfried (the northern Sigurd). After the close of the second lay of Helgi Hundingsbani in the Elder Edda we read : " But a little while lived Sigrun, because of her sorrow and trouble. But in old time folk trowed that men should be born again, though their troth be now deemed but an old wife's doting. And so, as folk say, Helgi and Sigrun were born again, and at that time was he called Helgi, the Scathe of Hadding, and she Kara, the daughter of Halfdan, and she was a valkyr, even as is said in the lay of Kara." According to mythical ideas and interpretations the heroes and heroines were often represented as "born again." With somewhat changed names and slightly different characteristics and attributes they were thought to be the same. Signy, Borghild (the warrior-maid of the funeral-pyre), Hjördis (the sword-maiden), the third wife of Sigmund and mother of Sigurd (Siegfried), were all valkyrs and only variations of the same type, just as Sinfjötli and Helgi were "born again" in Sigurd.

Lyngi, a son of Hunding, had wooed Hjördis ; but she preferred Sigmund, who, although well advanced in years, was the more famous hero. The Hundings made war on Sigmund and his men. The battle was fierce and fell ; and though Sigmund was old, yet he fought most sturdily, and was ever foremost among his men. Many an arrow and spear whizzed through the

air that day ; and so valiantly did his valkyrs strive for him, that he remained unscathed. When the battle had lasted a while, there appeared a man clad in a blue cloak and with a slouched hat on his head ; one-eyed he was, and in his hand he bore a spear. Advancing upon Sigmund, he hurled his spear at him ; Sigmund smote fiercely with the sword, but it struck upon the spear and snapped asunder. Thenceforth Sigmund's luck deserted him, and soon he fell in the thick of the fight, and the greater part of his men with him.

That night, after the battle, Hjördis went about among the slain, and arriving where lay King Sigmund, asked him if he might be healed ; but he answered : " Many a man lives after hope has grown dim ; but my luck has left me, nor will I suffer myself to be healed ; nor wills Wotan that I should ever draw sword again, since this my sword and his is broken. Lo, now, I have waged war while it was his will. But thou wilt bring forth a child ; nourish him well and with good heed, and our son shall be the noblest and the most famous of all our kin. And keep well withal the shards of the sword : thereof shall a goodly blade be made, and it shall be called Gram ; and our son shall bear it, and shall do many a great deed therewith, even such as time shall never lessen ; for his name shall abide and flourish as long as the world shall last. But now I grow faint with my wounds, and must away to our kin that have gone before me." Thus Sigmund died. Hjördis fled, in her flight meeting Alf, the son of Hjalprek, king of the Franks. When he learned who she was, he held her in great honor.

According to the Volsunga Saga, Hjördis, after the death of Sigmund, gave birth to a child who was named Sigurd and was brought up in the house of King Hjalprek. Sigurd's foster-father was called Regin,* the son of Hreidmar; he taught Sigurd all manner of arts, the lore of runes, and the speech of many tongues. According to the Nibelungen Lied his parents were Sigmund, king of the Netherlands, and the queen Sieglinde. He was brought up in the arts of chivalry, as was then customary with kings' sons. His father and mother were still living when Siegfried left his home as a knight in quest of adventures. The Nibelung versions with which we are most concerned at this stage are the "Lied vom Hürnen Seyfried" † and the Thidrek Saga.‡ In the latter, and in the second part of the former version, Siegfried does not know his parents, and is brought up by a smith. In both accounts he appears as the impetuous and unmanageable youth so well known in the later popular German tales. In the Thidrek Saga the smith was called Mimir (Mime); his brother was Regin, who had assumed the form of a dragon.§ Since Siegfried did altogether as he pleased,—beat the smith and his men, broke the iron asunder, and struck the anvil into the

* Mime in Wagner's dramas.

† See page 44.

‡ See page 43.

§ The fact that the dragon was originally a human being is still remembered in the Thidrek Saga, as well as in the "Lied vom Hürnen Seyfried," yet the primitive idea of the Nibelung hoard is not brought out. Thus the transformation into a dragon is not caused here by a desire to retain the treasure, as in the Eddas and the Volsunga Saga. Moreover, Mime and Regin appear here as friends.

ground,—the smith sent him into the forest for coal, hoping that he might be killed there by the dragon. But Siegfried slew the dragon and roasted the body over the fire. He dipped his finger into the bubbling blood to see whether the monster was fully roasted. In doing so he burned his finger, and on putting it into his mouth the voice of the birds became intelligible to him. They warned him of Mime's intentions. Then he anointed his whole body with the blood of the dragon, and thus became invulnerable, except at a spot between the shoulders which he could not reach. Thereupon he went home to Mime, who, to pacify his wrath, presented him the costliest weapons, among them the sword Gram; seizing which, Siegfried immediately slew the smith.

For reasons which will appear from a comparison of the above extract of the Thidrek Saga with Wagner's "Siegfried," the second evening of the Ring of the Nibelung, we have had to anticipate in the preceding lines some of the events which belong to a later period of the story. We will now resume our sketch of the Volsungs according to the Volsunga Saga and the Eddas.

Regin, the smith, was, as has been said above, the foster-father of Siegfried (Sigurd), and he took it upon himself to rear the youth. He artfully reminded him of his father's wealth which had come into the possession of King Hjalprek's son through the latter's marriage with Hjördis. Through Wotan's aid Siegfried obtained the famous horse Grani, which was descended from Sleipnir.* Then

* See page 11.

Regin said to Siegfried : " I can tell thee where there is much wealth for the winning, and great name and honor to be gained in the getting of it." Sigurd asked where that might be, and who had watch and ward over it. Regin answered : " Fafnir is his name, and but a little way hence he lies, on the waste of Gnita-heath ; and when thou arrivest there, thou mayest well say that thou hast never seen more gold heaped together in one place, and that none might desire more treasure, though he were the most ancient and famed of all kings." Regin constantly egged Siegfried on to slay Fafnir, and told him the following tale :*

" Hreidmar was my father's name, a mighty man and wealthy ; and his first son was named Fafnir, his second Otter ; and I was the third, and the least of them all both for prowess and good conditions ; but I was cunning to work in iron and silver and gold. My brother Otter had another nature : he was a great fisher, and had the likeness of an otter by day, and dwelt ever in the river. But Fafnir was by far the greatest and grimmest, and would have all things about called his. Now there was a dwarf, called Andvari, who ever abode in that force which was called Andvari's force, in the likeness of a pike ; my brother Otter was ever wont to enter into the force and bring fish aland. It befell that Odin (Wotan), Loki and Hoenir, as they wandered about on the earth, came to Andvari's force, and Otter had taken a salmon, and ate it, slumbering upon the river-bank. Then Loki took a stone and cast it at Otter, so that he met his death thereby. The gods were well content

* Also in the " Great Epics," pages 60 and 61.

with their prey, and flayed off the otter's skin. In the evening they came to Hreidmar's house and besought him to lodge them for the night, adding that they were well supplied with provisions; whereupon they showed Hreidmar what they had caught. But when Hreidmar saw the otter, he laid hands on them and doomed them to such ransom as that they should fill the otterskin with gold and cover it over without with gold. They made a treaty accordingly, confirming it with oaths. The gods thereupon sent Loki (who had been, as often before, the cause of their misfortune) to gather gold together for them. Loki borrowed the net of the sea-goddess Ran, and went to Andvari's force, cast the net before the pike, and the pike ran into the net and was taken. Then said Loki:

“‘ What fish of all fishes
Swims strong in the flood,
But hath learnt little wit to beware ?
Thine head must thou ransom
From abiding in Hel,
And find me the wan waters’ flame.’*

“ He answered :

“‘ Folk call me Andvari,
Call Oinn my father.
Over many a force have I fared ;
For a norn of ill-luck
Lay upon me this life
Through wet ways ever to wade.’

“ Loki demanded of Andvari all the gold he had in the

* The gold, since according to ancient tradition it was found in the depths of the water.

rock where he dwelt. Andvari produced it,* but Loki observed that he concealed a gold ring, and ordered him to give it up.† Then the dwarf went into a hollow of the rocks and cried out that that gold ring, yea, and all the gold withal, should be the bane of every man who should own it thereafter.‡

"The gods went with the treasure to Hreidmar and filled the otter-skin, and set it on its feet, and covered it over with gold; but when this was done, Hreidmar came forth and beheld yet one of the muzzle-hairs and bade them cover that withal; then Wotan drew the ring, Andvari's loom, from his hand, and covered up the hair therewith; then sang Loki:

"Gold enough, wealth enough,
A great weregild, thou hast,
That my head in good hap I may hold.
But thou and thy son
Are naught fated to thrive,
The bane shall it be of you both."

"Thereafter Fafnir slew his father and murdered him, nor got I aught of the treasure; and so evil he grew that he fell to lying abroad and begrudging any

* It had evidently been the property originally of the spirits of the deep, from whom Andvari had taken it. Giants and dwarfs, both equally covetous of wealth, often changed their forms to gain possession of treasures and to retain them.

† The dwarf begged Loki not to take it from him, for by the ring he could renew his treasure. (Younger Edda.)

‡ "The gold shall be the bane of two brothers and the destruction of eight nobles; no one shall rejoice in my wealth." (Elder Edda, Sigrdrifarkv, 2, 5.) Loki said that this seemed well to him, and that, in order to keep this purpose, he should bring these words to the knowledge of him who should possess the gold. (Younger Edda.)

share in the wealth to any man, and so became the worst of all dragons, and ever now lies brooding upon that treasure; but for me, I went to the king and became his master-smith: and thus is the tale told of how I lost the heritage of my father and the weregild of my brother."

So spoke Regin; and from this myth it is that gold is called Otter-gild or Otter-ransom. As we have seen, the curse was at once fulfilled on the first possessor of the ring. The gold, torn away from its original peaceful and innocent abode in the water where it was guarded by the spirits of the deep (Rhine daughters*), fell into the hands of the dark elves, the dwarfs, the Nibelungs (Andvari, Alberich); from them the gods wrested it and handed it over to the giants (Hreidmar, Fafnir, Fasolt) by a treaty.

Siegfried (Sigurd) said to Regin: "Make a sword by thy craft, such a sword as that none can be made like unto it, if thou wouldest have me slay this mighty dragon." So Regin made a sword and gave it into Siegfried's hands. He took the sword and said: "Behold thy smithying, Regin!" and therewith smote it into the anvil, and the sword broke. Then Regin forged another sword and brought it to Siegfried, who broke it even as the first. Then he said to Regin: "Art thou, may happen, a traitor and a liar like to those former kin of thine?" Then Siegfried brought the shards of the sword Gram, the gift of Wotan, which had belonged to his father Sigmund. He bade Regin make a good sword thereof as he best might. Regin grew wroth, but went into the smithy with the pieces

* In Wagner's drama.

of the sword. So he made a sword, and as he bore it forth from the forge it seemed as though fire burned along the edges of it. Siegfried smote the sword into the anvil and cleft it down to the stock, and neither burst the sword nor broke it. He praised the sword much, and thereafter went to the river (Rhine*) with a lock of wool, and threw it up against the stream, and it fell asunder when it met the sword. Siegfried, after avenging the death of his father Sigmund on the sons and the whole race of Hunding, went up along the heath that same way where Fafnir was wont to creep when he fared to the water. Regin was sore afraid and stayed behind ; he had treacherously advised Siegfried to dig a hole in the ground and from it smite the dragon to the heart, hoping that in this manner Siegfried might be stifled in the pit by the blood flowing from the monster's wounds. Siegfried by the advice of Wotan, who came to him in the guise of an old man, dug several pits so that the blood of the dragon might run therein, and he sat in one of them. Now crept the dragon down to his place of watering, and the earth shook all about him, and he snorted forth venom on all the way before him as he went ; but Siegfried neither trembled nor was afraid of his roaring. So when the dragon crept over the pits, Siegfried thrust the sword under his left shoulder, so that it sank in up to the hilt ; then Siegfried leaped up from the pit and drew the sword back again unto him. Now when that mighty dragon was aware that he had his death-wound, he lashed out head and tail, so that all things soever that

* From the Sigurdharkv. According to the latter poem and the Younger Edda he cleft the anvil after the trial of the sword in the Rhine.

were before him were broken to pieces. Then he asked Siegfried : " Who art thou ? and who is thy father ? and what thy kin, that thou wert so hardy as to bear weapons against me ? " Siegfried intended to conceal his name, since in accordance with ancient belief he feared the words of a dying man, if he should curse him by name ; so he replied : " Unknown to men is my kin. I am called a noble beast ; neither father have I nor mother, and all alone have I fared hither." Fafnir said : " Though thou tellest me not thy name on this my death-bed, yet thou knowest verily that thou liest unto me." Siegfried answered : " Siegfried am I called, and my father was Sigmund." Then said Fafnir : " Regin, my brother, has brought about my end, and it gladdens my heart that thine too he bringeth about, for thus will things be according to his will. A countenance of terror I bore up before all folk, after that I brooded over the heritage of my brother, and on every side did I spout out poison, so that none durst come nigh me. Such counsel I give thee that thou take thy horse and ride away at thy speediest, for often it happens that he who gets a death-wound avenges himself none the less." Siegfried answered : " Such as thy redes are I will nowise do after them ; nay, I will ride now to thy lair and take to me that great treasure of thy kin." " Ride there then," said Fafnir, " and thou shalt find gold enough to suffice thee for all thy life-days ; yet shall that gold be thy bane and the bane of every one soever who owns it." And therewithal Fafnir died.

Thereafter Regin came to Siegfried, and after some angry words bade Siegfried to roast Fafnir's heart for him. Siegfried roasted it on a spit, and when the blood

bubbled out he laid his finger thereon to see if it were fully done; then he put his finger in his mouth, and the heart-blood of the dragon touching his tongue, he was enabled to understand the voice of the birds and hear their warning of Regin's evil designs against him. He followed their advice, drew his sword Gram and struck off Regin's head, ate Fafnir's heart, and drank the blood of both.* Then he heard one of the eagles singing :

“ Bind thou, Siegfried,
The bright red rings;
Not kingly it is
To fear many things.
A fair maid I know,
Fair of all fairest;
If the treasure thou gainest,
Thou wilt gird her with gold.”

Another eagle sang :

“ A hall there is,
High on Hindarfiall,
Without all around it
Sweeps the red flame aloft.”

Another :

“ High on the mount
A shield-maiden sleeps;
The lime-trees' foet
Is playing about her.
The sleep-thorn set Wotan
Into the valkyr
For her felling in war
The one he would guard.

* According to ancient sagas wisdom and the gift of understanding the voice of the birds came from the eating of dragons' or serpents' hearts.

† Poetic term for fire.

"Go, hero, behold
The maid under helmet,
As from battle she rode
On showers tempestuous.
By the norns' decree
Sigurdrifa's* sleep
Cannot be broken
By the hero before."

Siegfried leaped on his horse and rode along the trail of the dragon to his abiding-place. He found it open, and the treasure buried deep in the earth. Thence he took the helmet of terror (Aeger's helmet), the golden byrny, and many things fair and good. He placed the gold in two great chests and set them on the horse Grani, but the horse would not stir until Siegfried mounted it.

By long stretches Siegfried rode on, till he came at last to Hindarfiall and turned southward to the land of the Franks. There he saw before him on the mountain a great light, as of burning fire, and the flames shone up to the sky. When he had passed the flame-wall, there stood before him a castle covered with shields,† and on the battlements hung a banner. Siegfried went into the castle, and saw one lying there asleep and all armed. He took the helmet from off the sleeper's head, and saw that it was a woman. Her coat of mail was so closely fastened on her that it seemed to have grown to her flesh. So he rent the corselet with his sword Gram downward from her neck and from both arms. Thereupon she awoke and asked :

* Siegfried will behold Sigurdrifa (the giver of victory), or Brunhild, as she appeared riding, as one of the valkyrs, through the air.

† Like a funeral-pyre for heroes. Siegfried was in the realm of death, whose magic power he was to destroy.

"What has rent my coat of mail?
 What has broken my sleep?
 Who has freed me from my baneful bonds?"

Siegfried answered :

"Sigmund's son
 With Siegfried's sword
 E'en now rent down
 The raven's tree.*

Of the Volsungs' kin is he who has done the deed.
 But I have heard that thou art daughter of a mighty
 king, and folk have told us that thou wert lovely and
 full of lore, and now will I learn the same."

Then Brunhild (Brynhild) sang :

"Long have I slept,
 And slumbered long.
 Many and long are the woes of mankind.
 By Wotan's might
 I could not break
 The spells of my slumber.

"Hail to thee, day, come back ;
 Hail, sons of the daylight !
 Hail to thee, daughter of night !†
 Look with kindly eyes down
 On us sitting here lonely,
 And give us the gain that we long for.

"Hail to you, gods !
 Hail to the goddesses !
 Hail to the fair earth, nourishing all !
 Fair words, wise hearts
 Would we win from you,
 And healing hands, while life we hold."

* The coat of mail; since the raven, eager for prey, alights on it as on a tree.

† Daughter (*niece* by some translators) of night is the sun.

She called herself Sigurdrifa (giving victory), and was a valkyr, also named Brynhild, being a warrior-maiden in coat of mail (byrny). She said to Siegfried: "Two kings fought, one of them being Helm Gunnar, an old man, and the greatest of warriors, and Wotan had promised the victory to him; but his foe was Agnar, and so I smote down Helm Gunnar in the fight; and Wotan, in vengeance for that deed, stuck the sleep-thorn into me, and said that I never again should have the victory (be Sigurdrifa), but should be given away in marriage. I, however, vowed that I would never wed a man who knew fear. Then Wotan enclosed me with a wall of wavering fire,* so that only a fearless hero should be able to free me from my sleep. Around my hall the destroyer of wood† he summoned, and commanded that through the fire that hero alone should ride who would bring me the gold that lay under Fafnir."

Brunhild taught Siegfried much of her wisdom, the lore of runes, and Siegfried said: "None among the sons of men can be found wiser than thou; and therefore I swear that thee will I have as mine own, for thou art as my heart desires." Brunhild replied: "Thee would I fainest choose, though I had all men's sons to choose from." And this they pledged to each other by oath. According to the Volsunga Saga, Brunhild went thence to the house of Heimir, where Siegfried met her again. She said to Siegfried: "It is not fated that we should abide together; I am a shield-maiden and wear helmet on head even as the kings of war, and them full often I help; neither has the battle become loathsome to

* See page 144.

† The flames.

me." Siegfried answered: "What fruit shall be of our life if we live not together? Harder it is to bear this pain than the stroke of the sharp sword." Brunhild replied: "I shall gaze on the host of war-kings, but thou shalt wed Gudrun, the daughter of Giuki (Gibich)." Siegfried said: "What king's daughter lives to beguile me? I swear by the gods that thee will I have for mine own, or no woman else." And so spoke she. Siegfried gave her the fatal ring of the dwarf Andvari, by which she too became mysteriously involved in the consequences of the curse that rested on the possessor of the hoard.

In the Nibelungen Lied the idea of the primitive abode of the gold "in the rolling waves of the Rhine," and of its later acquisition by the dark elves or Nibelungs, is not distinctly brought forward, yet the gloomy origin of the treasure is not entirely forgotten. Hagen knows that Nibelung and Schilbung, the sons of old King Nibelung, had quarrelled about their paternal inheritance, and were slain by Siegfried. To avenge his masters, Alberich (king of the elves) attacked Siegfried, but the latter overpowered the "strong dwarf" * and thus became the possessor of the hoard, among which were Alberich's famous *Tarnkappe*, or magic cap of darkness, rendering its wearer invisible, and the celebrated wishing-rod. To the Tarnkappe correspond in the northern traditions Siegfried's power of changing semblance, and the helmet of terror, Aeger's helmet, made by Regin, taken by Fafnir together with the hoard, and gained by Siegfried after the dragon's death.† The

* "Das Starke Gezwerg."

† "Oegis-hialmr (Aeger's helmet) must originally have been Oegi's

ring of the dwarf Andvari, by which the gold could ever be renewed, is identical with the wishing-rod, in so far as by the latter the treasure could always be replaced.

Siegfried left Brunhild and took the hoard* with him. He came to the court of King Giuki (Gibich),† whose realm was in the south on the Rhine.‡ According to the Volsunga Saga his sons were named Gunnar (the German Gunther), Högni (the same in name as the German Hagen) and Guttorm.§ Their sister was called Gudrun,|| and she was the fairest of maidens. Giuki (Gibich) had wedded Grimhild, the wise-wife, a fierce-hearted woman. The days of the Giukings bloomed fair, and chiefly because of those children, so far before the sons of men. According to the Thidrek Saga the king¶ had three sons, named Gunther, Gernot and

own (and Oegi is at times indistinguishable from Odhinn, Wotan), as Aegis is wielded by the two highest deities, Zeus and Athena; afterwards the helmet came into the hands of heroes. Out of the magic helmet sprang helot-helm, grim-helm, tarnkappe, wunschmantel (Kinder. no. 122), wunschhut, which bestow on dwarfs, heroes, and fortune's favorites the power to walk unseen, to sail swiftly through the sky. . . . Besides invisibility, this cloak (tarnkappe) imparts superior strength, and likewise control over the dwarf nation and their hoard." (Grimm's Teutonic Mythology, vol. ii. pp. 463, 870.)

* In the Nibelungen Lied Siegfried had the treasure brought back to the interior of the mountain, from which Schilbung and Nibelung had carried it out.

† Gibich is the name of the father of the three kings in the mediæval German epics with the exception of the Nibelungen Lied, where he is called Dankrat. The children of Gibich are called Gibichungs.

‡ The residence of the kings is Worms in most of the German traditions.

§ In the Younger Edda and in the Hyndla song Guttorm is the step-brother of the young kings.

|| Grimhild (Kriemhild) in the Nibelungen Lied.

¶ He is named Aldrian, and called king of the land of the Nibelungs.

Giselher, and a daughter, called Grimhild (Kriemhild), renowned for her beauty.* Once it befell that the wife of the king lay asleep in her garden, and a man came to her in the likeness of the king. After some time, when the queen was about to give birth to a child, the same man appeared before her as she was alone, and told her that the child was their son. He also said to the queen that he, the child's father, was an elf (Alberich), and "when the child has grown up, reveal to him who is his father, but conceal it from every one else. He will be a mighty man, and whenever he shall find himself in dire distress he shall summon his father to his aid." Thereupon the elf vanished like a shadow. Thereafter the queen gave birth to the child, and he was named Hagen (Högni), and called the king's son. When Hagen was four years old he was strong, and harsh and evil was his disposition. When he was told that his face was spectral, he waxed wroth at the reproach. He went to a stream and beheld his likeness therein. He saw that his face was as pale as ashes, and large; his appearance was fierce and grim. Thereupon he went to his mother and asked her how it happened that his figure was thus. Then the queen told him the truth about his father.

When the Nibelung myth in Germany became changed into a hero-saga, it was combined and blended with the saga of the historical Burgundians, whose king Gundicar was slain, with thousands of his followers, by the Huns in the year 437. The "Lex Burgundionum" mentions four kings, whose names are Gibica (Gibich),

* The names of the sons and the daughter agree with those in the Nibelungen Lied.

Godomar, Gislahar (Giselher) and Gundahar (Gunther). The combination of myth and saga was brought about by the Franks, which is apparent from the fact that the earliest evidences of the name "Nibelung" as an historical appellation are Frankish. The Burgundian kings are called Franci Nebulones in "Waltharius," and Rhine Franks in "Biterolf" and in the "Lament;" moreover the word "Nibelung" (Nivelongus or Nivelo) occurs as an historical name of Frankish princes in documents of the eighth and ninth centuries. Thus in the German traditions the Gibichungs appear as Burgundian kings, dwelling at Worms on the Rhine, the transformation having been brought about by the influence of history, the identity of mythical and historical names (Gibich and Gibica; Gundahar, Gundicar and Gunther; Gislahar and Giselher), and other circumstances. Hagen, who did not belong to those historical Burgundians, was retained in the saga, and together with his name of a "Frank" he preserved his "more than heroic nature." In "Waltharius" he is no relation of the royal house, and is said to be of Trojan race—a statement which is based on the old tradition of the descent of the Franks from Troy. In all the German poems of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries he is a relative of the kings, and their most powerful, trusty and distinguished vassal. In the Eddas and in the Volsunga Saga he is one of the royal brothers. He bears himself nobly, and protests against Siegfried's murder; yet he does not shrink from sharing the responsibility for the deed after it was done. In the north the name of Högni (Hagen) was associated with lofty deeds, and the assassination of Siegfried devolved on Guttorm, a stepbrother of the

kings. The account of Hagen's descent from an elf, a Nibelung, in the Thidrek Saga, as given above, is without doubt an ancient tradition. It was only by the change of the Gibichungs into Burgundian kings that Hagen became a mere relative (*mâc*) of the royal house.

Siegfried was well received by Gunther (Gunnar) and the other Gibichungs (Giukings), as he was by far the most renowned of all heroes. According to the Volsunga Saga, Grimhild, Gunther's mother, observed how ardently Siegfried loved Brunhild and how often he talked of her. She thought how well it might be were he to abide there and wed her daughter Gudrun, for she saw that none might come anigh to his greatness, and that he had more wealth withal than any other man. So on a night as they sat drinking, the queen arose and gave him the drinking-horn which contained a draught of forgetfulness. Siegfried drank, and from that time all memory of Brunhild departed from him. One night Gudrun poured out the drink and Siegfried beheld how fair she was, and graceful withal. Gunther said: "All things that may be will we do for thee, so thou abidest here long; both dominion shalt thou have, and our sister freely and unprayed for, whom another man would not get for his prayers." Siegfried answered: "Gladly will I take the same." Therewith they swore brotherhood together and to be even as if they were children of one father and one mother; and a noble feast was holden and endured many days. Now on a time went Grimhild to Gunther, her son, and spoke: "Fair blooms the life and fortune of thee, but for one thing only: thou art unwedded. Go woo Brunhild, and Siegfried will ride with thee." Gunther replied: "Fair is she indeed,

and fain would I win her.” Then Siegfried and Gunther rode towards the hall enclosed with wavering fire. But Brunhild had vowed to wed him only who would ride the horse Grani and pass through the flame-wall, well knowing that none durst do it save Siegfried alone. Gunther spurred his steed against the fire, but the horse shrank back. Thereupon Gunther and Siegfried changed semblance, even as Grimhild had taught them, and Siegfried in the likeness of Gunther mounted his horse Grani and leaped into the fire. A mighty roar arose as the fire burned even madder, and the earth trembled, and the flames went up even unto the heavens. But now the fire sank, and he leaped from his horse and went into the hall, even as the song says:

“The flame flared at its maddest,
Earth’s fields fell a-quaking
As the red flame aloft
Licked the lowest of heaven.
Few had been fain,
Of the rulers of folk,
To ride through that flame,
Or athwart it to tread.

“Then Siegfried smote
Grani with sword,
And the flame was slaked
Before the king;
Low lay the flames
Before the hero of fame,
Bright gleamed the array
That Regin erst owned.”

When Siegfried had passed through the fire, he came to a dwelling, and therein sat Brunhild. He said: “I am Gunther, and thou art awarded to me as my wife, since I have ridden through the wavering fire.” While

Siegfried stood on the floor of the hall and leaned on the hilt of his sword, Brunhild, mindful of the true Siegfried and of her valkyrian prowess, answered sorrowfully, but believed that he had spoken the truth. There Siegfried abode three nights, and they lay on one couch, but he placed his sword Gram between her and him. Afterwards he took from her the ring of the dwarf Andvari and rode back through the flames ; then he and Gunther changed semblance again. Gunther was wedded to Brunhild, and when the wedding-feast was ended, Siegfried remembered all the oaths he had sworn to Brunhild, yet he let all things abide in rest and peace. One day as Brunhild and Gudrun went to the river to bathe, Brunhild waded the farthest out into the river ; then Gudrun asked what that might signify. Brunhild said : " Why should I be equal to thee in this matter more than in others ? My husband is greater than thine, and has accomplished many glorious deeds. It is he who rode through the flaming fire." Gudrun replied wrathfully : " Thou wouldest be wiser to be silent ; there is none in this world like unto my husband ; he was thy first beloved, and Fafnir he slew, and he rode through thy flaming fire, whereas thou didst deem that he was Gunther the king, and from thy hand he took the ring Andvaranaut (Andvari's loom) ; here mayest thou well behold it." Brunhild saw the ring and knew it, and waxed as wan as a dead woman.

In the Elder Edda the quarrel between the queens is not mentioned ; the Younger Edda contains an account of it very much like the one in the Volsunga

Saga, which has just been given. Instead of the wavering fire surrounding Brunhild's abode, as related in the Edda and Volsunga Saga, the Nibelungen Lied mentions the games of casting the spear, hurling the stone, and leaping, in which each suitor of Brunhild had to match his skill with hers. The successful competitor she was pledged to marry; all others were doomed to death. Siegfried, rendered invisible by the Tarnkappe, aided Gunther in the combat, and Brunhild was defeated.

The quarrel arose through the comparison of the two husbands; and when Brunhild called Siegfried Gunther's vassal,

"To her replied fair Kriemhild: * 'Thou shalt well understand,
As thou hast called my Siegfried a liegeman of this land,
This day by all the vassals it shall be plainly seen
That I'll go to the minster preceding Gunther's queen.' "

Kriemhild entered the minster, and as she came out she triumphantly showed Brunhild the ring (and the girdle).

According to the Volsunga Saga Siegfried went to Brunhild and said: "Awake, Brunhild, cast off grief from thee and take pleasure!" She answered: "How then hast thou dared to come to me? in this treason none was worse to me than thou." Siegfried said: "As one under a spell art thou, if thou deemest that there is aught cruel in my heart against thee; but thou hast him for husband whom thou didst choose." "Ah, nay," she replied; "never did Gunther ride through the fire, nor did he give me to dower the host of the

* Gudrun in the northern traditions.

slain. I wondered at the man who came into my hall ; for I deemed indeed that I knew thine eyes, but I could not see clearly, or divide the good from the evil, because of the veil that lay heavy on my fortune." Siegfried assured her that a king like Gunther was worthy of her love ; but her rage became greater at his words, as they were spoken by the man whom she loved. She said : " This is the sorest sorrow to me, that the bitter sword is not reddened in thy blood." But afterwards Siegfried exclaimed : " I loved thee better than myself, although I fell into the wiles whence our lives may not escape ; for whensoever my own heart and mind availed me, then I sorrowed sore that thou wert not my wife." Brunhild replied : " Too late thou tellest me that my grief grieveth thee. I swore an oath to wed the man who should ride through the flaming fire, and that oath will I hold or die." And she called to mind how they had met, they two, on the mountain, and sworn oath each to each. Siegfried said : " Rather than thou die, I will wed thee, and put away Gudrun." But Brunhild answered : " I will not have thee, nor any other." Thereupon Siegfried left her, as saith the song :

"Out then went Siegfried,
The great kings' belovèd,
From the speech and the sorrow,
Sore drooping, so grieving,
That the corselet about him,
Of iron rings woven,
From the sides brake asunder
Of the brave in the battle."

When Gunther came to Brunhild, she spoke : " I will not live, for Siegfried has betrayed me, and thee no

less ; and this shall be Siegfried's death, or thy death, or my death." Gunther was bound to Siegfried by oath, and this way and that way swung the heart within him ; but at last he said : " Brunhild is better to me than all things else, and the fairest woman of all women ; I will lay down my life rather than lose the love of her." He also thought of the gold that Siegfried had wrested from Fafnir. He therefore acceded to Brunhild's demand for Siegfried's death.* Guttorm, Gunther's stepbrother, who had not sworn the oath of brotherhood with Siegfried, was urged to commit the murder, and great rewards and honors were promised to him. Guttorm, purposely excited by magic drinks, went to Siegfried as he lay on his bed, yet he durst not do aught against him, but shrank back ; and even so he fared a second time, for so bright and eager were the eyes of Siegfried that few durst look upon him. But the third time he went in, and there lay Siegfried asleep. Then Guttorm drew his sword and thrust Siegfried through in such a manner that the sword-point smote into the bed beneath him. Siegfried awoke with the wound, and Guttorm drew back unto the door. Siegfried seized the sword Gram and cast it after him, and it smote him on the back and struck him asunder in the midst, so that his feet fell one way, and his head and hands back into the room. When Brunhild heard Gudrun's loud bewailings, she laughed heartily ; but soon after she began to weep over the very deed to which she had urged her husband, and foretold the woe that was to follow Siegfried's murder. Then she thrust a sword into her

* Högni (Hagen in the northern epics) protested against the deed.

side and sank upon the pillows of her couch, while she asked Gunther as a last boon to have her borne to Siegfried's funeral-pyre, and a drawn sword placed between them, as once in the days of yore. There she was burned by the side of her first and only love.

The Younger Edda, the Volsunga Saga, and most of the songs of the Elder Edda relate that Siegfried was murdered while sleeping in his bed ; yet according to the "Lay of Brunhild," and to the "Second Lay of Gudrun," in the Elder Edda, he was slain outdoors. At the end of the "Lay of Brunhild" the collector of the poems wrote a few lines in prose, referring to these different tales of Siegfried's death, and also stating that according to German traditions he was murdered in the wood. Whatever may have been the original version of the saga, the most important point is that in all accounts Siegfried was treacherously slain—a fact already recognized in the concluding sentence of the prose remarks after the "Lay of Brynhild": "But all say with one accord that they betrayed him in their troth and murdered him, as he lay unarrayed and unawares."

In the Nibelungen Lied, Hagen, whose stern countenance and grim appearance denoted his descent from the dwarfs, the Nibelungs, the powers of darkness, although he is called a relative of the kings, made a solemn vow that Siegfried should have to atone for Brunhild's sorrow. Gunther's weak nature made him listen to the words of grim Hagen, whose wily tongue depicted to Gunther the danger which he might incur while so great a king as Siegfried lived, who outshone the power and glory of the Burgundian monarch. Kriemhild (Gudrun), struck with fatal blindness, be-

lieved Hagen to be a sincere friend of Siegfried, and she confided to the traitor a secret referring to Siegfried's former slaying of a dragon by the side of a mountain :

“ When from the wounded dragon the boiling blood streamed down,

Deep in its gore bathed Siegfried, the knight of great renown.
There fell between his shoulders a broad-shaped linden-leaf;
And there he can be wounded : this gives me heart-felt grief.”

Gunther ordered a great hunt to take place in the Odenwald, and Siegfried declared himself ready to accompany the king. The chase began amidst a joyous tumult and the sounds of the bugle, so that hill and dale gave back the loud echoes. After a successful hunt Siegfried sat down with Gunther, Hagen, and the other hunters to enjoy the meal that had been prepared for them. When he called for wine, Hagen told him that the hampers had been sent by mistake to the Spessart forest, but that he knew of a spring of cool and clear water. When Siegfried desired to be directed to the spring, Hagen, in an apparently careless manner, said to Siegfried : “ I have been told that no one can surpass thee in running.” Siegfried replied to Hagen : “ Let us run a race to the spring—King Gunther, you and myself.” Gunther and Hagen divested themselves of their armor and heavy garments and ran like two fierce panthers, yet Siegfried, laden with his weapons, arrived first at the spring. Gunther stooped and drank ; and when he had arisen, Siegfried did likewise. Then Hagen stealthily put away Siegfried's sword and bow beyond his reach, took the hero's spear that leaned

against a linden-tree, and thrust it through the cross which Kriemhild had embroidered on her husband's mantle to show where he could be wounded. Siegfried took his shield, and, with the deadly spear between his shoulders, overtook the traitor fleeing in craven flight, and smote him with the shield until it was broken into pieces. Thus Siegfried died. In the Eddas and in the Volsunga Saga it is but natural and in accordance with the lofty character of the valkyr Brunhild that she should slay herself after Siegfried's death. On the other hand, in the Nibelungen Lied, where Brunhild and Siegfried's relations are different, and Brunhild's pride, and not her love of Siegfried, appears to be the main motive of action, there seems to be no reason why she should seek death after her honor had been avenged. In the Nibelungen Lied Hagen has the hoard sunk into the Rhine. This is the natural conclusion of the myth, but not of the saga. The different versions of the latter after Siegfried's death, whether in the Scandinavian or in the German traditions, do not concern us here. We may, however, state briefly that in the Nibelungen Lied Kriemhild wreaks most cruel vengeance on her brothers and on Hagen for the death of Siegfried. In the Eddas and in the Volsunga Saga she (Gudrun) becomes reconciled to her brothers and avenges their death on their murderer, her second husband, Atli. As indicated above, the true termination of the whole tragedy after the death of atoning love (Brunhild and Siegfried) is the return of the gold into the depths of the Rhine, whereby the curse of the Nibelung is removed from the "glittering valrings," the rings of strife and destruction.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RHEINGOLD.

EVER since the year 1845 the powerful tragedy of the Nibelungs had exercised a most potent influence on Richard Wagner's highly poetic nature. As Franz Hueffer states, it was during the composition of "Lohengrin" that the old contest in Wagner's mind between the mythical and historical principles was finally decided. "The representative of the former was Siegfried, the hero of the earliest of Teutonic myths; that of the latter Frederick the First, the great emperor of the Hohenstaufen dynasty, whose return from his sleep of centuries was for a long time connected by the German people with the revival of the old imperial glory. The victory remained with Siegfried."* In the domain of history Wagner perceived merely relations or circumstances and not man himself, or man only so far as he was controlled by the power of circumstances; while in the realm of myth he saw the pure soul of humanity. Desiring to give an artistic form and expression to the inmost wishes of his heart, he devoted himself to the ardent study of Teutonic antiquity, especially of the mediæval German poems and the old Scandinavian epics and sagas. By stripping the Teutonic myth of the various garbs in which it had been clad, and to some extent disfigured, by later

* "Richard Wagner," by Franz Hueffer, page 65.

poetic productions and sagas, it was revealed to him at last in its pure, primitive raiment and chaste beauty; and with it he found in the myth what he sought—the true man; that is, what is purely human, freed from all conventionalism—the tragedy of the human soul.

The poem of the “Ring of the Nibelung” was printed for circulation among the friends of the composer in the year 1853; it was published in 1863. Although the master deemed music the only language befitting the ideal sphere of the myth, his dramas could not be called operas in the ordinary sense of the word. He named them, therefore, musical dramas, and the “Ring of the Nibelung” is a festival play for three days and a fore-evening. The fore-evening is entitled The “Rheingold;” the first day, The “Walküre;” the second day, “Siegfried;” the third day, The “Götterdämmerung,” the dusk or downfall of the gods. As early as 1848 he had written the drama “Siegfried’s Death,” which later, considerably modified, came to form the fourth and last part of the Ring, the “Götterdämmerung.” He then wrote “Siegfried,” afterwards “Die Walküre,” and last “Das Rheingold.” The poem is written in alliterative lines, a form of versification most appropriate to the contents and the whole atmosphere of the drama. Wagner says that at the mythical source where he found the youthful Siegfried he also found the melody of speech, the only one in which such a being could express himself. It is a well-known fact that alliteration (*Stabreim, stave-rhyme*) is used in the Elder Edda and in all the other earliest remnants of Scandinavian and German poetry. “The strophe generally contains eight verses or lines, four of which are so

united that every half of the strophe contains an independent thought, and each of these halves is again divided into two parts, which form a fourth part of the whole strophe and contain two lines belonging together by alliteration. In these two lines three words occur (in the oldest poems frequently only two) beginning with the same letters, two of which must be in the first, while the third is usually at the beginning of the second line. The third and last of these letters is called the chief letter (*höfudhstafir*, head-stave), because it is regarded as ruling over the two others which depend on it and have the name sub-letters (*studlar*, supporters). The lines are metrically divided into accented and unaccented syllables. These simple rules of versification govern the lays of the Edda." Still there are exceptions to this rule in the Edda, some of the poems being written in the so-called Ljódhahâttr. This form of versification was often employed in a more or less modified manner in Wagner's Nibelung dramas. It is a strophe of six lines, of which the first and second and the fourth and fifth belong together, while the third and sixth are independently alliterated. The following is an example of Wagner's adaptation of the Ljódhahâttr.

Fricka.

Wotan ! Gemahl ! Erwache ! Wotan ! Husband ! Awaken !

Wotan.

Der Wonne seliger Saal	The hall of hallowed delight
Bewachen mir Thür und Thor ;	Is guarded with bolt and bar ;
Mannes Ehre,	Manhood's honor,
Ewige Macht,	Infinite might,
Ragen zu endlosem Ruhm !	Gleam with glory unending !*

* See page 86.

The most melodious alliterative rhymes are formed in German by the letters *l*, *w* and *s*, as is evident from the well-known Spring-song of Siegmund in the "Walküre."* In this connection we may quote Franz Hueffer's remarks on the subject: "The strong accents of the alliterating syllables supply his melody with rhythmical firmness; while on the other hand the unlimited number of low-toned syllables allow full liberty to the most varied nuances of declamatory expression. In order to exemplify the step in advance, I will ask the reader to compare the song of Wolfram in 'Tannhäuser' ('Dir Hohe Liebe'), where the iambic metre has been obliterated and the verse constantly cut to pieces by the musical cæsura, with the wonderful love-song from the 'Walküre' ('Winterstürme wichen'), where verse and melody seem to glide on together in harmonious rhythms like the soft winds of spring of which they tell."

Besides the Spring-song there are many other instances of beautiful alliterative versification; there are necessarily also lines of a different character, though they are just as appropriate to the contents as the lines referred to above. To show the expression of wrath, harshness and contempt, the verses in "Siegfried" on page 169 may serve as an example. The alliterative sound or rhyme is mostly consonantal and rests on the radical or chiefly significant syllable.† These remarks

* See page 124.

† If the alliterated words begin with a vowel, the vowels are different. See the Spring-song in the "Walküre" "Weit geöffnet, lacht sein Aug'."

will be sufficient to show in a general way the poetic form in which Wagner's drama is written.

As has been indicated above, the gold according to ancient Teutonic traditions was imagined to lie in the waters' depths. It was a common belief that the golden sun descended every evening into the sea to repose there at night, and thus the ocean came to be considered as the abode of all wealth. In northern sagas the gold is often called the fire of Aeger (the sea-god). Later the sea-gold became the river-gold, the Rhinegold, since in old German traditions the gold was thought to be concealed especially in the waters of the Rhine, the national river, hallowed in history, saga and legend. When in the heroic era the dangers and abuses of wealth began to be seen in the increasing power and overbearing might of the kings and chieftains, the ideas of evil, guilt and misfortune were easily connected with the acquisition of riches. Thus the leading thought in the "Rheingold" is this: the gold is ravished from its primitive innocent abode and its original possessors, personified here by the Rhine-daughters, the guardians of the treasure, in order to acquire riches and power. To this conception is added the ethical idea that he only can rob the gold and employ it for that purpose by whom love has been forsaken and accursed; by him alone can be wrought from the gold the ring, the symbol of sensuous splendor and material power. But as soon as the gold has ceased to be what it has been—the playful sport of the spirits of the deep—as soon as it has become the object of acquisition for the sake of wielding infinite power alone, the curse rests upon it, and whoever owns it is doomed to destruction by the

envy of others. It is the curse of the first evil deed that it ever must bring forth new evils.

At the opening of the "Rheingold" the scene represents the bottom of the Rhine. "A short instrumental introduction depicts the sound and motion of the deep. It is founded on the chord of E flat, given out at first in long-drawn notes, which soon dissolve themselves into shorter rhythmical formations, rising and falling alternately from the highest to the lowest octaves, like the murmuring waves of a rapid river. A suave theme is gradually developed, with the strains of which the three water-maidens accompany their merry gambols."* A greenish twilight prevails, lighter upwards, darker downwards. The water appears flowing onward, the turbulent waves tossing from right to left. Towards the bottom the water seems dissolved into a mist, which gradually grows fainter and fainter, so that the space of a man's height from the ground appears to be entirely free from the water, which flows like a succession of clouds over the dark abyss. Everywhere rugged rocky cliffs rise from the bottom and form the boundary of the scene. The whole floor is broken into a wilderness of jagged masses, so that nowhere is it entirely level, and suggests in every direction deeper abysses extending into thickest gloom. In the middle of the scene, round a cliff which with its slender point rises up into the larger and brighter waves, one of the Rhine-daughters, *Woglinde*, swims about in graceful movement. She is soon joined by another, *Wellgunde*, who dives down from the flood to the cliff, and they

* F. Hueffer, page 85.

try playfully to catch each other. *Flosshilde*, the third Rhine-daughter, joins them.

The three Rhine-maidens now swim away from each other with joyful cries, and, laughing and playing, dart from cliff to cliff. The gold lies still uncoveted at the bottom of the Rhine. But presently, out of a dark chasm from below, appears the wily dwarf Alberich, the treacherous Nibelung, who looks with growing delight on the frolicsome game of the Rhine-daughters. "His arrival is at once announced in the orchestra by a new theme, the jerky abruptness of which indicates the nature of the mischievous dwarf. The introduction of a surreptitious G flat into the graceful motions of the water-music is a master-stroke of graphic characterization."* Alberich exclaims:

Aus Nibelheim's Nacht
Naht' ich euch gern,
Neigtet ihr euch zu mir.

From Nibelheim's gloom
I'd gladly draw near,
Winning welcome to gain.

The maidens dive deeper and perceive the hideous form of Alberich. *Flosshilde* is aware of impending danger; she swims swiftly upwards and says:

Hütet das Gold !
Vater warnte
Vor solchem Feind.

Guard the gold !
Father warned us
'Gainst such a foe.

Alberich, dazzled by the beauty of the maidens, begs them to let him join in their play. *Flosshilde*, seeing

* F. Hueffer, page 85.

that amorous passion has taken possession of the Nibelung, says:

Nun lach ich der Furcht,
Der Feind is verliebt. Now laugh I at fear,
 The foe is in love.

“ The scene which ensues, descriptive of the vain endeavors of the gnome to gain one of the maidens for his desire, is full of the most subtle touches of musical illustration. The amorous rage of Alberich, and the mock tenderness with which the girls, each in her own characteristic way, receive his offers, are rendered in the most humorous way. Flosshilde’s answer, for instance, in its sweet, almost Italian softness, seems very nearly to resemble the expression of true passion, but for a slight touch of overstrained sentiment, which reminds us that all is put on, and that poor Alberich is to be jilted mercilessly when he thinks his happiness most secure. The easy grace with which these elementary beings are drawn by Wagner proves his dramatic vocation no less than the graver notes of passion which are to follow soon.” The Rhine-maidens, one after the other, begin to tease Alberich by alternately alluring and repulsing him. They swim away from each other, hither and thither, now higher, now lower, to provoke him to pursue them. In vain are all his efforts to seize one of them; and at last, foaming with rage, he stretches his clenched fist up towards them. At that moment his attention is suddenly caught by a beautiful spectacle. Through the flood from above a gradually brighter-growing light has penetrated, which now, at a high spot in the middle cliff, kindles into a dazzling and brilliant glare; a magical golden light

breaks thence through the water. The Rhine-daughters joyfully salute the gold as the rays of the rising sun fall upon it, while Alberich's glance is irresistibly attracted by the light. The maidens give expression to the contempt they feel for the Nibelung, since he had never heard of the Rhinegold before. If it is naught but a plaything for the maidens, Alberich pretends to disdain it; but Wellgunde thoughtlessly says:

Der Welt Erbe	The realm of the world
Gewänne zu eignen,	By him shall be won
Wer aus dem Rheingold	Who from the Rhinegold
Schüfe den Ring,	Hath wrought the ring
Der maaslose Macht ihm ver- lieh'.	Imparting measureless power.

Despite the warning of Flosshilde, the sisters unwittingly betray the secret. Woglinde exclaims:

Nur wer der Minne Macht ver-	Who the delight of Love for-
sagt,	swears,
Nur wer der Liebe Lust ver-	He who derides its ravishing
jagt,	joy,
Nur der erzielt sich den Zauber	He alone has the magic might
Zum Reif zu zwingen das Gold.	To mould into ring the gold.

Yet the Rhine-daughters deem themselves safe from danger, as all beings are born to love, and Alberich especially appeared to pine away with amorous desires. The Nibelung, however, had his glance fixed on the gold, while he listened to the chatter of the maidens. He forgets their charms and accurses love, since to him it means but sensual enjoyment.

Alberich.

(Aside.)

Der Welt Erbe	The realm of the world
Gewänn' ich zu eigen durch	By thy might may I ravish and
dich?	win?
Erzwäng' ich nicht Liebe,	Though Love I relinquish,
Doch listig erzwäng' ich mir	In delight at least I may revel.
Lust.	

(To the Rhine-daughters.)

Das Licht löscht' ich euch aus;	Your light I quickly quench;
Das Gold entreiss' ich dem	The gold from the rock I
Riff,	wrench,
Schmiede den rächenden Ring:	And forge the wrathful ring.
Denn hör' es die Fluth—	To the waves I appeal
So verfluch' ich die Liebe!	To witness how Love I ac- curse!

He plucks the gold from the cliff and plunges with it into the depths, where he disappears. Dense night breaks suddenly in on every side. The maidens dive after the thief into the waters below.

It remains to mention the weird music accompanying the rape of the gold by Alberich, and the lamentations of the water-maidens sounding through the darkness at the end of this scene. The latter are illustrated by the identical strains of their joyful song, but appearing here in a sad C-minor transformation, continued by the orchestra in an interlude which, founded on the melodious materials already alluded to, leads gradually into the second scene.

In the following scenes of the "Rheingold" appear the gods Wotan, Thor, Frô and Loki; the goddesses Fricka, Freyja and Erda; the Nibelungs Alberich and Mime; and the giants Fasolt and Fafnir. In this con-

nection the reader is referred to the sketch of Teutonic mythology in the first two chapters of this volume, especially to the Svaldfari myth on page 10; and also to the myth of Andvari in the Nibelung traditions on page 53. It will be seen how beautifully Wagner combined and blended the two myths. Instead of the otter-skin which in the Andvari myth the gods must cover with gold, it is Freyja, in Wagner's drama, whose beauteous form must be concealed by the Nibelung hoard from the eager glances of the giants.

In the second scene of the "Rheingold" an open country on mountain heights becomes visible, at first only in a dim light. The breaking day illumines with growing brightness a castle with glittering battlements that stands on a rocky eminence in the background; between this castle-crowned rock and the foreground of the scene a deep valley is to be imagined, through which the Rhine flows. On the flower-decked bank lies Wotan, with Fricka beside him; both are asleep. Fricka awakes; her glance falls on the castle; she is surprised and dismayed. She awakes Wotan; he replies in his dream with the words given on page 78. Fricka retorts:

Auf, aus der Träume	Up; from alluring
Wonnigem Trug!	Delusion of dreams!
Erwache, Mann, und erwäge !	Awaken, and weigh what's be- fall'n !

Wotan awakes and raises himself slightly; his eye is immediately caught by the sight of the castle, "the symbol and stronghold of his power. This power of the gods is rendered in the grand melody opening the

scene, which may be called the Valhall motive." Wotan exclaims :

Vollendet das ewige Werk :	Achieved is the glorious work :
Auf Berges Gipfel	On mountain height
Die Götterburg,	The hall immortal ;
Prachtvoll prahlt	In gorgeous grandeur
Der prangende Bau.	Glitter its walls.
Wie im Traum ich ihn trug,	As I drew it in dream,
Wie mein Wille ihn wies,	As I marked it in mind,
Stark und schön	Resplendent and strong
Steht er zur Schau :	It displays its might :
Hehrer, herrlicher Bau !	Lofty, lordly abode !

Fricka.

Nur Wonne schafft dir,	In delight thou revel'st,
Was mich erschreckt ?	When I am alarmed ?
Dich freut die Burg,	Thou'rt glad cf the fortress,
Mir bangt es um Freia.	For Freyja I fear.
Achtloser, lass dich erinnern	Bethink thee, thou thoughtless god,
Des ausbedungenen Lohns !	Of the guerdon now to be given !
Die Burg ist fertig,	The castle is finished,
Verfallen das Pfand :	And forfeit the pledge.
Vergiss'st du, was du vergab'st ?	Forgettest thou, what is en- gaged ?

The golden age of innocence had vanished. Wotan, striving for power, planned to rule the world from his lofty castle, an impregnable fortress. The giants Fasolt and Fafnir had agreed to build it for the gods. They now demand the promised reward: Freyja, the goddess of youth, love and beauty. Wotan endeavors to calm the anger and apprehensions of Fricka, and tells her that he relies on Loki's help. She reproves him for trusting to the dubious services of the treacherous god. Wotan replies :

Wo freier Muth frommt,	Where only valor avails,
Allein frag' ich nach keinem ;	I venture, aided by none.
Doch des Feindes Neid	But to fit to my fancy
Zum Nutz sich fügen,	The hatred of foes,
Lehrt nur Schläueheit und List,	I list to the lore of deceit,
Wie Loge verschlagen sie übt.	To Loki's insidious art.
Der zum Vertrage mir rieth	Who framed and planned the plot,
Versprach Freia zu lösen :	Is pledged Freyja to ransom :
Auf ihn verlass ich mich nun.	On him alone I rely.*

The giants are indignant at Wotan's refusal to deliver Freyja to them, and wrathfully insist on the fulfilment of the agreement. Fasolt thinks more of Freyja's womanly charms, while Fafnir knows how important it is for the welfare of the gods to keep the goddess of youth among them. He says:

Gold'ne Aepfel	Golden apples †
Wachsen in ihrem Garten,	Grow in her garden ;
Sie allein	None but she
Weiss die Aepfel zu pflegen :	Knows how to nurse them
Der Frucht Genuss	The delicious fare
Frommt ihren Sippen	Confers on her kindred
Zu ewig nie	The flower of youth
Alternder Jugend ;	For years sempiternal ;
Siech und bleich	But blanched appears
Doch sinkt ihre Blüthe,	The bloom of their cheeks,
Alt und schwach	Old and weak
Schwinden sie hin,	They wax and wither
Müssen Freia sie missen :	If Freyja's freedom they miss.
Ihrer Mitte drum sei sie ent-führt !	From their midst we'll lead her along.

* In the Svadilfari myth it is likewise Loki who advised the treaty with the artificer. See page 9.

† See pages 18 and 19.

Wotan is angry at Loki's delay; the giants press forward towards Freyja; Thor and Frô hurry in to protect her.

Thor.

Fasolt und Fafner,
Fühltet ihr schon
Meines Hammer's harten
Schlag ?

Fasolt and Fafnir,
Have ever you felt
My hammer's heavy blow ?

Fafnir.

Was soll das Droh'n ?

What means the threat ?

Fasolt.

Was dringst du her ?
Kampf kies'ten wir nicht,
Verlangen nur uns'ren Lohn.

Wherefore the thrust ?
War we choose not to wage,
We claim the guerdon we've
gained.

Thor.

(Den Hammer schwingend.)
Schon oft zahlt' ich
Riesen den Zoll ;
Schuldig blieb ich
Schächern nie :
Kommt her ! des Lohnes Last
Geb' ich in gutem Gewicht !

(Swinging his hammer.)
Often I've dealt
To giants their due ;
Never have rested
In debt of knaves ;
Come hither ! the load of re-
ward
I deliver in heaviest weight !

Wotan.

(Seinen Speer zwischen den Streiten-
den ausstreckend.)

(Interposing his spear between the
adversaries.)

Halt, du Wilder !
Nichts durch Gewalt !
Verträge schützt
Meines Speeres Schaft :
Spar' deines Hammer's Heft !

Refrain from fury !
Naught by force !
The shaft of my spear
Shelters my oath ;
Withhold thy hammer's haft !

Loki appears and, as was his custom, at first taunts the gods. Unconcerned at their distress, he relates

how he viewed the castle built by Fasolt and Fafnir, and found it impregnable. Wotan reminds Loki of the solemn promise he had given to rescue Freyja from the giants; but Loki replies that he only vowed to do everything in his power to attain that end. Yet despite all his efforts, he says, he has not succeeded.

Fricka.

(Zu Wotan.)

Sieh', Welch trugvollem
Schelm du getraut !

(To Wotan.)

Lo! what untruthful
Rogue thou hast trusted!

Frô.

Loge heisst du,
Doch nenn' ich dich Lüge !

Loki thou'rt hight,
But liar I name thee.

Thor.

Verfluchte Lohe,
Dich löscht' ich aus !

Accursèd fire,
I quench thy flame !

As Thor and Frô are about to attack Loki, Wotan interferes in his behalf. He knows the dilatory habits of the wily god, and is convinced that Loki will at last unfold his plan for saving Freyja. Loki reproves the gods for their ingratitude, and tells them that far and wide in every corner of the world he sought to find a ransom for Freyja, but it became evident that nowhere could sufficient wealth be found to compensate man for the delight the companionship of fair and gentle woman brings. At these words the gods are surprised. He found, continues Loki, in the water, on the earth and in the air all beings bent on love, save one —the Nibelung, dark Alberich, who rifled the gold of the Rhine. Loki artfully relates the whole adventure of the Rhinegold and the ring, and arouses the greed

of gain and power both in the gods and the giants. Perceiving the effect of his cunning, and knowing at heart the real designs of Wotan, he asks him with crafty insinuation and feigned frankness, worthy of Mephistopheles, if he will restore the gold to the Rhine-daughters. Wotan stands in silent struggle with himself; the other gods, in speechless suspense, fix their eyes on him. Gods and giants know what dangers fate has in store for them if the gold remains in the hands of Alberich. Meanwhile Fafnir, aside, has consulted with Fasolt. The giants declare that they will be satisfied with the Nibelungs' ruddy gold as ransom for Freyja. Wotan angrily refuses their demand, since he will not encounter the Nibelung for the sake of Fasolt and Fafnir.

Fasolt.

(Ergreift plötzlich Freia und führt sie mit Fafnir zur Seite.) (Suddenly seizes Freyja and takes her with Fafnir aside.)

Hieher, Maid !

In uns're Macht !

Als Pfand folg'st du jetzt,

Bis wir Lösung empfah'n.

Hither, Maid !

Mark our might !

Till ransom be furnished,

As pledge thou must follow us now.

(Freia schreit laut auf, alle Götter sind in höchster Bestürzung.) (Freyja shrieks ; all the gods are in the greatest consternation.)

Fafnir.

Fort von hier

Sei sie entführt !

Bis Abend, achtet's wohl,

Pflegen wir sie als Pfand :

Wir kehren wieder ;

Doch kommen wir,

Away from here

We hasten with her !

Till evening—heed it well—

We hold her in pledge ;

We then shall return ;

But if at that time

Und bereit liegt nicht als Lö- The Rhinegold, ruddy and
sung light,
Das Rheingold roth und licht— Lie not ready for ransom—

Fasolt.

Zu End' ist die Frist dann, Then all will be over,
Freia verfallen : Freyja be forfeit,—
Für immer folge sie uns ! For e'er she'll follow us hence.

Freyja is carried away by the giants ; the gods hear with amazement her cries of distress dying away in the distance. Loki gazes after the giants and describes how clumsily they hurry down the valley across the Rhine to Riesenheim. Then he turns to the gods and sarcastically says: "What means Wotan's wrath? How fare the heavenly gods?" All at once a pale mist begins to rise and gradually increases in thickness; in it the gods appear pale and old ; all stand looking with anxiety and expectation at Wotan, who fixes his eyes on the ground in thought.

Loki.

Trügt mich ein Nebel ?	Deludes me a mist ?
Neckt mich ein Traum ?	Mocks me a dream ?
Wie bang und bleich	How sad and wan
Verblüht ihr so bald !	Have you waned so soon .
Euch erlischt der Wangen Licht ;	Blanched is the bloom of your cheeks ;
Der Blick eures Auges ver- blitzt !—	The flame of your eyes has fled !—
Frisch, mein Frô, Noch ist's ja fröh !—	Cheer up, my Frô, Yet early it is !—
Deiner Hand, Donner, Entfällt ja der Hammer !	From thy hand, dear Thor, Is dropping the hammer !
Was ist's mit Fricka ?	How fares it with Fricka ?

Freut sie sich wenig Faintly she smiles
 Ob Wotan's grämlichem Grau, At Wotan's grayness and
 gloom,
 Das schier zum Greisen ihn As old in aspect he grows.
 schafft ?

Then Loki tells the gods, in a manner highly satisfactory to himself, the cause of their changed aspect. With the disappearance of Freyja, the gods are bereft of youth, beauty and strength. As for himself, Loki adds, he is less concerned about it, since Freyja had ever given him but sparingly of the precious fruit. The golden apples in her garden have begun to wither.

Fricka.

Wotan, Gemahl,	Wotan, husband !
Unsel'ger Mann !	Behold thy doom .
Sieh', wie dein Leichtsinn	Lo ! how thy lightness
Lachend uns allen	Hath laughingly wrought
Schimpf und Schmach erschuf !	Ruin and wreck for us all !

Wotan.

(Mit plötzlichem Entschluss auf-	(Starting up with sudden resolution.)
fahrend.)	
Auf, Loge !	Up, Loki !
Hinab mit mir !	Follow along !
Nach Nibelheim fahren wir	To Nibelheim's night we must
nieder ;	fare ;
Gewinnen will ich das Gold.	The glittering gold I will gain.

Loki.

Die Rheintöchter	The river-maidens
Riefen dich an :	Thy might implored :
So dürfen Erlösung sie hoffen ?	May they hope to be heard ?

Wotan.

(Heftig.)

(Impetuously.)

Schweige, Schwätzer !
 Freia, die gute,
 Freia gilt es zu lösen.

Enough of thy nonsense !
 Freyja, the goddess,
 Freyja be ransomed and freed.

Loki.

Wie du befiehlst,
 Führ' ich dich gern ,
 Steil hinab
 Steigen wir denn durch den
 Rhein ?

At thy behest
 We hasten from here ;
 In steep descent
 Through the stream of the
 Rhine shall we stride ?

Wotan.

Nicht denn durch den Rhein ! Not through the Rhine !

Loki.

So schwingen wir uns
 Durch die Schwefelkußt :
 Dort schlüpfe mit mir hinein !

Then come ! we'll descend
 Through the sulphurous chasm;
 Slyly we'll slip through the
 cleft.

Loki descends first, and disappears sideways in a cleft, out of which immediately issues a sulphurous mist. Wotan follows.

Wotan had made a solemn compact with the giants, and the stability of his realm depends on the sacredness of his oath. "As if to remind him of this limit of his power, the orchestra intones a solemn theme, which might be called the law or bond motive. It appears first as the scale descending from B flat to the octave C natural, and occurs again frequently in the course of the piece, being recognizable by its peculiar rhythmical formation. Another important melody of great sweetness, which first occurs in this scene, is that which

marks the entrance of Freyja, the goddess of youth; to its sounds she implores the assistance of Wotan against her pursuers, whose clumsy footsteps, following the lovely maiden, are characterized by a heavy rhythmical phrase in the orchestra. The contrast between the natures here brought in contact is thus expressed by the music with an intensity wholly unattainable by verbal explanation. As to Loki, the chromatic motive expressive of his character resembles the fitful flickering of fire. In Loki's flames the splendor of Valhall is doomed to perish, and it is also by his means that the moral guilt of the gods, which already in the Eddic poems is the cause of their fate, is brought about."

The mist that had risen out of the cleft after Loki and Wotan disappeared in it spreads itself over the whole scene and quickly fills it with thick clouds, so that the gods who remained behind have become invisible. The sulphurous mist darkens until it becomes a dense black cloud which moves from below upward. This is transformed into a firm dark chasm of rock which is moving upward, so that it seems as if the stage were sinking deeper and deeper into the earth.

"A short interlude depicts in broad touches the descent of Wotan and Loki to the subterraneous realm of Alberich the Nibelung. A hammering rhythm in the orchestra, enforced by eighteen tuned anvils behind the scenes, tells us that we are approaching the country of the smiths." From different directions in the distance dawns a dark-red glimmer; a huge subterranean cavern becomes visible, which on all sides seems to issue in narrow clefts. Alberich drags the shrieking Mime* by

* As to the work and general character of the dwarfs, see pages 24-26.

the ear out of a side-passage, and threatens him with dire punishment if he does not at once produce the work which Alberich had imposed upon him. Mime, after some hesitation, says that something is still missing to complete the task; yet, trembling with fear, he lets fall a piece of metal-work which he held convulsively in his hands. Alberich immediately picks it up and examines it closely.

Alberich.

Schau, du Schelm !	See, thou rogue !
Alles geschmiedet	All is wrought
Und fertig gefügt,	And fully finished,
Wie ich's befahl !	Fit to my fancy !
So wollte der Tropf	The wily fiend
Schlau mich betrügen,	Would fain outwit me,
Für sich behalten	Guard for himself
Das hehre Geschmeid,	The gorgeous gear
Das meine List	He learned to weld
Ihn zu schmieden gelehrt.	By the wiles of my lore.
Kenn' ich dich dummen Dieb?	Thy foolish knavery I know !
(Er setzt das Gewirk, als Tarn-helm, auf den Kopf.)	(He places the piece, as Tarn-helm,* on his head.)
Dem Haupt fügt sich der Helm :	The helmet fits my head,
Ob sich der Zauber auch zeigt?	Behold if the wonder will work !
—“Nacht und Nebel, Niemand gleich!”—	—“Night and mist, Alike to none!”—

Alberich's figure vanishes; in its place a pillar of cloud appears. His voice is heard as he threatens Mime with punishment for his thievish designs. Mime screams and writhes under the audible lashes of an invisible whip. Then Alberich haughtily summons all

* See pages 102, 206 and 219.

the Nibelungs and tells them that henceforth ceaseless toil shall be their fate ; they must serve him, the lord of the Nibelungs, although he be not visible to them. The pillar of cloud recedes towards the background, where it vanishes. Alberich's wrathful tones gradually become fainter and fainter ; howls and cries resound from the lower clefts. The sound by degrees dies away in the further distance. Mime from agony has fallen to the ground ; his groaning and whimpering are heard by Wotan and Loki, who come down by a cleft from above.

Loki.

Nibelheim hier :	Nibelheim here !
Durch bleiche Nebel	Through night and gloom
Wie blitzen dort feurige Fun-	What a glitter of fiery sparks !
ken !	

Wotan.

Hier stöhnt es laut :	What moans so loud ?
Was liegt im Gestein ?	What lies on the mound ?

Loki recognizes Mime and bids him be cheerful ; he even promises to aid him in his misfortune.

Mime.

(Sich etwas aufrichtend.)	(Raising himself slightly.)
Wer hälfe mir ?	Who bodes me help ?
Gehorchen muss ich	Obey I must
Dem leiblichen Bruder,	The law of my brother
Der mich in Bande gelegt.	Who boldly laid me in bonds.

Loki.

Dich, Mime, zu binden,	To bind thee, Mime,
Was gab ihm die Macht ?	What gave him the might ?

Mime.

Mit arger List	With artful malice
Schuf sich Alberich	Alberich made
Aus Rheines Gold	From the gold of the Rhine
Einen gelben Reif :	A ruddy ring ;
Seinem starken Zauber	At its magic power
Zittern wir staunend ;	Amazed, we tremble ;
Mit ihm zwingt er uns alle,	With the ring he bends to his rule
Der Niblungen nächtiges Heer.	The Nibelungs' night-born host.
Sorglose Schmiede	Gleefully once
Schufen wir sons wohl	We worked on glittering
Schmuck unseru Weibern,	Gifts for our wives,—
Wonnig Geschmeid,	Winsomest gear,
Niedlichen Niblungentand :	Neatest Niblung toys.
Wir lachten lustig der Müh'.	We laughed for love of the toil.

Then Mime relates how Alberich now compels the dwarfs to work for him alone. By the power of the ring he discovers where the precious metals are hidden in the bowels of the earth. Ceaselessly the Nibelungs must dig up and smelt the ore. Mime also tells Loki about the helmet he made for Alberich, and how, suspecting its great magic power, he tried to keep it for himself, so that by this means he might free himself from Alberich's rule, and perhaps even wrest the ring from him. Yet, he continues, too late he divined the secret charm which was connected with the helmet and by which its wearer could render himself invisible. In the mean time Alberich's voice is heard in the distance, and Mime warns Loki and Wotan of his approach. Wotan seats himself on a stone; Loki stands at his side. Alberich, who has taken the Tarn-helm off his head

and hung it at his girdle, with his whip drives before him a throng of Nibelungs upwards from the lower chasm. They are laden with gold and silver treasure, which under Alberich's constant goading they store in a pile and so heap to a hoard. Alberich severely scolds them, then draws the ring from his finger, kisses it, and with threatening mien shows it to his brother and the other Nibelungs. They disperse, trembling with fear, and escape to the chasms below to bring up more gold. Alberich with a fierce gesture approaches Wotan and Loki.

Wotan.

Von Nibelheim's nächtigem Land	From Nibelheim's night-born land
Vernahmen wir neue Mähr':	We lately tidings have learned
Mächtige Wunder	Of wonders rare
Wirke hier Alberich;	That Alberich wrought.
Daran uns zu weiden	To behold their splendor
Trieb uns Gäste die Gier.	Hither we hied as thy guests.

Alberich gives vent to his suspicions of the two strangers, and particularly of Loki, who reveals his identity to him. Yet the powerful dwarf defies the gods, and boasts of his might through the power of the gold; and as Wotan asks him of what use the hoard could possibly be in joyless Nibelheim, he replies:

Schätze zu schaffen	Treasures to raise
Und Schätze zu bergen,	And treasures to hide,
Nützt mir Nibelheim's Nacht;	Avails me Nibelheim's night;
Doch mit dem Hort,	But with the hoard,
In der Höhle gehäuft,	Upheaved in the hollow,
Denk' ich dann Wunder zu wirken:	Wonders to work I intend;

Die ganze Welt The realm of the world
 Gewinn ich mit ihm mir zu I'll win, and rule by my wiñ.
 eigen.

When Wotan sarcastically requests Alberich to tell him how he intends to achieve this benevolent purpose, Alberich retorts :

Die in linder Lüfte Weh'n	Though in breath of tranquil breezes
Da oben ihr lebt,	Ye live aloft,
Lacht und liebt ;	Laugh and love ;
Mit gold'ner Faust	With the gold in my palm,
Euch Göttliche fang' ich mir alle !	Ye gods, in my power you fall!
Wie ich der Liebe abgesagt, Alles was lebt	As love I forswore for aye, All that lives
Soll ihr entsagen : Mit Golde gekirrt,	Shall forsake its delight ; Allured with gold,
Nach Gold nur sollt ihr noch gieren.	For gold alone you shall pine.
Auf wonnigen Höh'n	On winsome heights
In seligem Weben	In hallowed weaving
Wiegt ihr euch ;	Ye wave above ;
Den Schwarz-Alben	The dusky elf
Verachtet ihr, ewige Schwel- ger.	Ye disdain in your revels un- ending.
Habt Acht !—	Have heed !
Habt Acht !—	Have heed !
Denn dient ihr Männer	When first you men
Erst meiner Macht,	Are foiled by my might,
Eure schmucken Frau'n—	With your dainty women—
Die mein Freien verschmäht—	Whom to woo I disdain—
Sie zwingt zur Lust sich der Zwerg,	The dwarf in delight will dally,
Lacht Liebe ihm nicht !—	Though love dwells in him not!
Hahahaha !	Hahahaha !

Hört ihr mich recht ?	Hear you aright ?
Habt Acht !	Have heed !
Habt Acht vor dem nächtlichen Heer,	Have heed of the night-born host,
Entsteigt des Niblungen Hort	When the Niblung's hoard shall ascend
Aus stummer Tiefe zu Tag !	From silent depth into day !

Mime's account of Alberich's cruelty and power is "an exceedingly interesting piece of music. Accompanied by the anvil rhythm, he sadly recalls his former happy life as a careless smith, working with his comrades pretty trinkets for their wives. The melody of his song is very simple, and reminds the hearer somewhat of the Volkslied, or popular ballad. A fine touch of humorous instrumentation has been pointed out by a German critic. When Mime mentions the Tarn-helmet, and adds how he was in hopes of cheating his brother out of its possession, his vain attempt at cunning is charmingly parodied by the semi-quavers of the somewhat clumsy fagotti. The satire is quite as perspicuous, although not quite as broad, as the celebrated horn by which Mozart supplements Figaro's tale of his imaginary conjugal troubles. The entire scene is conceived in a thoroughly humorous spirit. The flagellations of the cruel Alberich and the pitiful shrieks of his victims are depicted by the music in the most realistic manner. In the ensuing dialogue between Wotan and the Nibelung the contrast is particularly remarkable between the latter's spasmodic outbreaks and the lofty though passionate bearing of the higher god. The first notes of Wotan's address betray at once the dignified reserve of the gentleman in his unwilling intercourse

with the clown. Even Loki's restlessness is vastly different from the coarser accents of the dwarf. In the economy of the trilogy the present scene holds a position analogous to the satyr-drama of the antique tragedy."

Loki pretends to admire Alberich's cunning and power, but slyly intimates that possibly the ring might be stolen from him at night during his sleep. Alberich derides him, and boasts of the power of the Tarnhelm that renders its wearer invisible, while he may be everywhere without being seen by any one. Moreover, he tells Loki that by the might of the magic helmet he can change his semblance at will. Of this information Loki is determined to take advantage; he pretends to doubt Alberich's word, and assures him that he will only believe the marvel when he sees it with his own eyes. Alberich, scorning Loki's seeming stupidity, puts on the helmet and utters a few words of incantation. He suddenly disappears; in his place a huge snake is visible, rearing and stretching its open jaws towards Wotan and Loki. The latter pretends to be terror-struck, while Wotan laughs at the appearance of the serpent. The monster disappears, and Alberich becomes again visible in his real form. When he asks Loki if he will now believe him, the wily god replies that he has certainly achieved an unheard-of wonder. Yet Loki insinuates that perhaps it may not be so easy for Alberich to transform himself into a very small creature. The Nibelung again puts on the magic helmet, and the gods become aware of a toad among the stones, creeping towards them. Wotan puts his foot on the toad; Loki grasps at its head and holds the

helmet in his hand. Alberich suddenly appears in his real form, as he writhes under Wotan's foot. Loki takes a rope and binds his arms and legs. Alberich wrathfully struggles to free himself, but he is over-powered by the gods, who drag him with them towards the cliff by which they had come down.

We may here again quote Hueffer's remarks: "Alberich is caught in the snare thus laid for his vanity. The orchestra intones a strange melody, which sounds like some runic formula of conjuration; and instead of Alberich we see an enormous worm wriggling slowly on the ground. At Loki's bidding the charm is applied a second time, Alberich appearing now as a toad, the hopping of which is like the slow movements of the worm on the first occasion, graphically illustrated by the music. A change of tempo from *moderato* to *presto* announces that the gods have torn the helmet from Alberich's head and are dragging the powerless dwarf from the dark recesses of his realm. On passing the smithies we once more hear the monotonous rhythm of the anvils."

The scene is gradually transformed back to the open region on mountain heights, as beheld in the second scene. It is, however, still shrouded in a pale mist, as before the second transformation, after Freyja's departure. Wotan and Loki, leading Alberich in bonds, ascend from the cleft. Loki greets the desperate Nibelung with mocking words, while Alberich's helpless rage grows fiercer and fiercer when Wotan tells him to give up the hoard for his ransom. He upbraids the gods for their greed of gain, yet he needs must agree to deliver the gold. He puts the ring to

his lips, and at his behest the Nibelungs arise from the cleft, laden with the treasures of the hoard.

Alberich.

(Aside.)

O schändliche Schmach,	O shameful disgrace,
Dass die scheuen Knechte	That the groping wretches
Geknebelt selbst mich er-	My rueful grief should behold !
schauen !—	(To the dwarfs.)
Dorthin geführt,	Heap it up there !
Wie ich's befehl' !	Heed my behest !
All zu Hauf'	Pile up the hoard,
Schichtet den Hort !	And heave it on high !
Helf' ich euch Lahmen ?—	Linger not lamely,
Hieher nicht gelugt !—	Look not at me !
Rasch da ! Rasch !	Hasten ! Hasten !
Dann röhrt euch von hinnen ;	Then hurry from hence
Dass ihr mir schafft,	Down to your toil
Fort in die Schachten !	In the dusky shafts !
Weh' euch, find' ich euch faul !	Woe to the weary and faint !
Auf den Fersen folg' ich euch	On your heels I follow you
nach.	fast.

The Nibelungs, after they have piled up the hoard, slip timidly down again into the cleft.

Alberich.

Gezahlt hab' ich,	The ransom I've paid,
Lasst mich nun zieh'n :	Now let me depart !
Und das Helmgeschmeid,	And the lordly helmet,
Das Loge dort hält,	That Loki there holds,
Das gebt mir nun gütlich zu-	In friendship remit unto me !
rück !	

Loki throws the magic helmet on the hoard, whereupon Alberich becomes furious. Yet inwardly he con-

soles himself, thinking that Mime at his command might forge for him another helmet of like power. He now desires to be released from his bonds; but as Loki asks Wotan if he is satisfied with the ransom, Wotan replies, turning to Alberich :

Ein gold'ner Ring	A golden ring
Glänzt dir am Finger:	Gleams on thy finger:
Hörst du, Alp?	Hearest thou, elf?
Der, acht' ich, gehört mit zum Hort.	Methinks it belongs to the hoard.

Alberich, terrified at Wotan's demand, refuses to give up the ring, and says that it belcngs to him as well as his hands, head, eyes and ears belong to his body. But Wotan scornfully upbraids him for deeming the ring his own, and tells him to ask the Rhine-daughters if they have willingly given him the gold from which he made the ring.

Alberich.

Schmähliche Tücke !	O shameful fraud !
Schändlicher Trug !	O frightful sham !
Wirfst du, Schächer,	Darest thou, wretch,
Die Schuld mir vor,	Arraign me for deeds
Die dir so wonnig erwünscht ?	Thou hail'st with delight in thy heart ?
Wie gern raubtest	From the Rhine the gold
Du selbst dem Rheine das Gold,	Thou gladly thyself wouldest have wrenched,
War nur so leicht	Hadst thou been aware
Die List, es zu schmieden, er-	Of the wisdom to fashion the charm ?
langt ?	For thy weal then befell it,
Wie glückt' es nun	Thou feigning knave,
Dir Gleissner zum Heil	That the Niblung here
Dass der Niblung, ich,	

Aus schmählicher Noth,	In wretched need,
In des Zornes Zwange	In the heat of wrath,
Den schrecklichen Zauber ge-	The charm terrific had
wann,	wrought
Dess' Werk nun lustig dir lacht ?	Which now is thy laughing delight ?
Des Unseligsten,	Fraught with curses,
Angstversehrten,	The frightful deed
Fluchfertige,	Which I, the most wretched,
Furchtbare That,	Banefully wrought,—
Zu fürstlichem Tand	For princely display
Soll sie fröhlich dir taugen ?	Should now be pleasing to thee ?
Zur Freude dir frommen mein	My curse should cause thee de- light ?
Fluch ?	
Hüte dich,	Have heed,
Herrischer Gott !	Thou haughty god !
Frevelte ich,	If wrong I did,
So frevelt' ich frei an mir	I wronged but a deed of mine :
Doch an allem, was war,	But on all that was,
Ist und wird,	Is and will be,
Frevelst, Ewiger, du,	A crime, thou god, is thy craft,
Entreisest du frech mir den	If the ring is wrenched from my grasp !
Ring !	

Wotan with vehement force tears the ring from Alberich's finger, the Nibelung shrieking horribly, and puts it on his, contemplating it with delight. Alberich's bonds are loosed by Loki. The Nibelung raises himself from the ground, and with furious laughter utters a frightful curse on every one who thereafter shall wear the ring. Death shall it bring to its wearer; no happiness shall come from its glaring light; he who possesses the ring shall be the prey of unending sorrows, and he who has it not shall pine for its might. The possessor of the ring shall be its slave, until it comes back into Al-

berich's hand. The Nibelung then vanishes quickly down into the cleft, and the mist in the foreground of the scene gradually grows clearer. Loki, looking towards the right, perceives Fasolt and Fafnir from afar, leading Freyja. From the other side Fricka, Thor and Frô appear. Fricka anxiously inquires after the success of Wotan's undertaking, whereupon Loki points to the hoard. The foreground has become bright again; the appearance of the gods assumes in the light its former freshness. Over the background, however, the mist is still visible, so that the distant castle cannot be seen. Fafnir and Fasolt appear, with Freyja between them. Fricka joyously hastens towards her and embraces her.

Fasolt.

Das Weib zu missen,	To part with the maid
Wisse, gemuthet mich weh :	Painfully preys on my mind :
Soll aus dem Sinn sie mir	My heart henceforth she would
schwinden,	harass,
Des Geschmeides Hort	Unless the hoard
Häufe denn so,	Be heaped aloft,
Dass meinem Blick	Till from my face
Die Blühende ganz er verdeck' !	The fair one wholly be hid !

Fafnir and Fasolt thrust their staves in front of Freyja into the ground in such a way as to comprise the same height and breadth as her figure. Loki and Frô swiftly heap up the treasure between the staves. Fafner with rude force presses it close together, and stoops down to see if there are any open spaces. In the mean time, while Wotan can hardly suppress his rage against the giants, Fricka, fixing her glance on Freyja, bewails the shameful treatment to which the

lofty goddess is thus exposed. Fafnir rudely calls for more gold ; and Thor is about to attack the giant, when Wotan exclaims that Freyja's figure is hidden by the hoard. At the same time Loki says that all the gold had been parted with. Fafnir, measuring the hoard with his eyes, replies that he can see Freyja's hair, and demands the magic helmet. Loki throws it on the pile of gold. Fasolt then approaches the hoard and spies through it; he perceives Freyja's gleaming eye, and at once declares that she cannot be freed unless she be wholly concealed from sight. Fafnir demands the ring, but Wotan stubbornly refuses to give it up. Fasolt then furiously drags Freyja from behind the hoard, and cries out that the goddess must follow the giants to their home. Despite the entreaties of Fricka, Frô and Thor to yield the ring and thereby procure Freyja's ransom, Wotan is still determined to keep it. Fafnir for a moment holds off Fasolt, who is about to lead Freyja away. The gods stand amazed, and Wotan wrathfully turns away from them. Darkness reigns again on the scene. From the rocky cliffs at the side a bluish light breaks forth. In it Wotan immediately perceives Erda, who half emerges from the depth ; she is of noble mien, with long black hair. Erda stretches her hand warningly towards Wotan.

Erda.

Weiche, Wotan, weiche !
Flieh' des Ringes Fluch !

Rettungslos,
Dunklem Verderben
Weiht dich sein Gewinn.

Yield, O Wotan, yield !
Escape from the curse of the
ring !

To hopeless woe,
To doleful harm,
Dooms thee the gain of the
ring.

Wotan.

Wer bist du, mahnendes Weib? Who art thou, warning woman?

Erda.

Wie alles war, weiss ich ;	All that was I know ;
Wie alles wird,	How all now is,
Wie alles sein wird,	And hence shall be,
Seh' ich auch :	Behold I too :
Der ew'gen Welt	The measureless world's
Ur-Wala,	Immortal Vala,
Erda, mahnt deinen Muth.	Erda, warns thee : beware !
Drei der Töchter,	To daughters three,
Ur-erschaff'ne,	Yore-begotten,
Gebar mein Schooss :	Birth I gave ;
Was ich sehe,	What I view,
Sagen dir nächtlich die Nornen.	Unveil to thee nightly the Norns.*
Doch höchste Gefahr	But dreadful danger
Führt mich heut'	Draws me hither
Selbst zu dir her ;	In haste to-day ;
Höre! höre! höre!	Hearken ! hearken ! hearken :
Alles was ist, endet.	All that is, shall end.
Ein düst'rer Tag	A gloomy day
Dämmert den Göttern :	Dawns for the gods ;
Dir rath' ich, meide den Ring!	My rede is : refrain from the ring !

Erda slowly sinks down, up to her breast, while the bluish gleam begins to darken.

Wotan.

Geheimniss-hehr	Mystery weird
Hallt mir dein Wort :	Resounds in thy words :
Weile, dass mehr ich wisse !	Delay, till more I have learned !

* See page 29.

Erda.

(Im Verschwinden.)

Ich warnte dich—
Du weisst genug :
Sinne in Sorg' und Furcht !

(Sie verschwindet gänzlich.)

(As she is disappearing.)

I warned thee now—
Thou knowest enough ;
Consider in sorrow and fear !

(She vanishes.)

Wotan.

Soll ich sorgen und fürchten—	Shall fear and sorrow beset me—
Dich muss ich fassen, Alles erfahren !	I'll hold thee now, All I will know !

He is about to rush into the cleft to seize Erda, but Thor, Frô and Fricka throw themselves before him and prevent him. He remains lost in deep thought for some time, and then suddenly, by a strong effort of the will, arrives at a decision. He throws the ring on the hoard, and the giants let Freyja go. She joyfully hastens towards the gods, who display their great delight by caressing her.

" Erda is the pantheistic symbol of the universe, the timeless and spaceless mother of god and man. In the melody which accompanies her words we recognize the gradual rising of the waves in the orchestral prelude, a significant circumstance establishing the affinity of the primeval sources of the world."

Fafnir has spread out a huge sack, and begins to pack the hoard in it. Fasolt becomes angry with Fafnir, since the latter takes the greater part of the treasure for himself. Fasolt begs the gods to settle the dispute, but Wotan disdainfully turns away from him. Loki perfidiously advises Fasolt to let the hoard go and care

only for the ring. Fasolt rushes on Fafnir and grasps at the ring; they wrestle with one another, until Fasolt wrenches the ring from Fafnir. The latter strikes furiously at Fasolt with his staff, and with one blow stretches him on the ground. While Fasolt is dying, Fafnir hastily snatches the ring from him, which he puts in the sack, and then slowly gathers together the rest of the hoard. All the gods stand amazed at the deed; and Wotan, having thus witnessed the death of the first victim of Alberich's curse, ponders in long and solemn silence on the events that fate may have in store for the gods. He is deeply agitated, and resolves by himself to descend to Erda's abode, so that he may learn from her the tidings of the future.* Even when Fricka presses caressingly towards him, and points to the castle whose lofty walls bid welcome to their lord and master, Wotan's gloom does not vanish; he says that with baneful pay he acquired the abode. Thor pointing to the background, still enwrapped in a veil of mist, ascends a high rock in the slope of the valley and swings his hammer. The clouds gradually draw closer about him, until he vanishes wholly in a huge mass of thunder-cloud which grows darker and darker. Then the blow of his hammer is heard falling heavily on the rock; fierce flashes of lightning dart out from the cloud, and a violent thunder-clap follows. He summons to him Frô, who disappears with him in the cloud. All at once the cloud vanishes. Thor and Frô are visible; from their feet in dazzling brightness a rainbow-bridge extends over the dale to the castle. The latter, now illumined by the setting sun, shines in

* See page 131.

brightest splendor. Fafnir, who, by the side of his murdered brother, had at last packed the whole hoard, has left the scene with the huge sack on his back, during Thor's storm-spell. Wotan turns to Fricka and says: "Follow me, wife; in Valhall abide with me!" They walk towards the bridge; Frô and Freyja, and, a little further behind, Thor, follow. Loki remains standing for a short while, looking after the gods. Foreseeing their final destruction, he derides them in an undertone, and expresses his wish to transform himself again into flickering flames, so that he may devour the gods that of yore had bound him and forced him to serve them. At last he leisurely joins them. Out of the depth resounds the song of the Rhine-daughters:

Rheingold !	Rhinegold !
Reines Gold !	Purest gold !
Wie lauter und hell	How once thy flame
Leuchtetest einst du uns !	Around us flashed its rays !
Um dich, du klares,	And now the loss
Nun wir klagen !	Of thy light we bewail !
Gebt uns das Gold,	Give us the gold,
O gebt uns das reine zurück !	O give us again its gleam !

Wotan, who is just about to set foot on the bridge, halts, turns round, and asks Loki whence come the plaintive strains. When he learns the truth, he gives vent to his anger against the river-maidens. Loki scornfully tells them to rejoice in the new splendor of the gods. The gods laugh and step on the bridge. From the depth is heard again the song of the Rhine-daughters:

Rheingold !	Rhinegold !
Reines Gold !	Purest gold !
O leuchtete noch	O would that thy light
In der Tiefe dein laut'rer Tand !	Waved in the waters below !
Traulich und treu	Unfailing faith
Ist's nur in der Tiefe :	Is found in the deep,
Falsch und feig	While above, in delight,
Ist was dort oben sich freut !	Faintness and falsehood abide !

The gods stride over the bridge towards the castle.
Thus closes the "Rheingold."

"It remains to point out the fine psychological use to which the leading motives are turned in this scene. While Wotan is still under the power of the gold, the ring-motive in the orchestra paints the struggle of his soul ; his moral effort in parting with the ring is powerfully expressed by the bond-motive, which in a manner connects his act with the moral order of the world, of which he is the guardian and representative. . . . The musical conception of this extremely powerful scene (the quarrel between Fasolt and Fafnir) is founded on a combination of the ring-motive and the formula of Alberich's curse, the former being representative of the irresistible attraction of the gold, the latter of its baneful power. . . . The gathering of the thunder-storm up to the fortissimo of the actual outbreak is rendered by the wild rhythms of triplets and semi-quavers in the strings. When the fury of the storm is expended, the wind-instruments commence a quiet, long-drawn melody in G flat, which indicates the rainbow thrown by Frô across the valley. . . . The grand chords of the Val-hall Motive bring the 'Rheingold' to a splendid musical conclusion. The 'Rheingold' might be compared to the

prologue in Heaven prefixed to Goethe's Faust, for it foreshadows in the minds of divine beings the sufferings and aspirations of the human actors. In the present drama, however, the gods are not placid contemplators of the events to follow; they are themselves tragic objects, and their own fate, nay, their very existence, is at stake. The germs of the whole trilogy may indeed be recognized in the introductory piece."

CHAPTER V.

THE WALKÜRE.

AT the close of the "Rheingold" we have seen how Wotan, striding over the rainbow-bridge towards the castle erected by the giants, conceived the thought of calling the new abode of the gods "Valhall" (the hall of the slain heroes). To aid the gods in the approaching struggle—the "Götterdämmerung"—the Valkyrs, Wotan and Erda's daughters, had to select on the battle-field the noblest and greatest warriors of the world and lead them to Valhall. But all these champions were of little avail, since they could act only according to Wotan's command. What was most needful for the welfare of the gods was a hero not included in the curse resting on the possessor of the Nibelung hoard, who should by his own free will, unaided by Wotan, obtain the ring, and by returning it to the Rhine accomplish the work of redemption. In furtherance of this, two human children, the twins Siegmund and Sieglind, were born to Wotan. Early in youth they were separated, since the mortal foe of their house, Hunding, destroyed their home and carried off Sieglind as his bride. Siegmund grew up to manhood in the forest, amidst battles and storms. At first he was with his father Välse, as Wotan called himself, but

one day the father disappeared forever.* Siegmund was not the free hero that could accomplish the object held in view by Wotan, for the curse on the Nibelung gold was transferred to him by his father.

The first act of the "Walküre" opens at the house of Hunding. In the centre of the hall rises the trunk of a gigantic ash-tree whose mighty roots extend far over the ground. The branches reach over the high roof, and are supposed to spread over the whole building. The walls are made of roughly-hewn wood, covered here and there with plaited and woven hangings. To the right, in the foreground, is a hearth; behind it an inner room, like a kind of larder. In the background is a large door with a plain wooden bolt. To the left a few steps lead up to the door of an inner apartment. Farther towards the foreground are a table, with a bench fastened to the wall, and a few wooden footstools. A short orchestral prelude, weird and stormy, recalling partly the Valhall scene at the closing act of the "Rheingold," forms the introduction. It portrays a fierce storm, first in its most violent and then in its calmer aspect. "The triplets of the violins denote the beating of hail and rain on the leaves of tall trees, the rolling phrase in the double basses being suggestive of the angry voice of thunder." At the rise of the curtain, Siegmund, with a bear-skin thrown over his shoulder, hurriedly opens the door in the background and enters. Evening is approaching; the storm is passing away; the fire blazes fitfully on the hearth, and lightnings now and then flash through the hall. Siegmund stops for a moment and surveys the room; he seems utterly ex-

* See page 121.

hausted, and his apparel and appearance denote that he has been pursued by an enemy. Perceiving no one in the hall, he closes the door behind him, walks towards the hearth, and throws himself wearily on a bear-skin rug lying in front of it.

Siegmund.

Wess' Herd dies auch sei,	Whose hearth soe'er this be,
Hier muss ich rasten.	Here must I rest.

He sinks back and remains for some time stretched out motionless. Sieglind comes in through the door of the inner apartment. From the noise she has heard she imagines that her husband has returned ; she grows serious and is surprised at finding a stranger stretched out before the hearth.

Sieglind.

(Noch im Hintergrunde.)	(Still in the background.)
Ein fremder Mann !	A stranger here !
Ihn muss ich fragen.	What brought him hither ?
(Sie tritt ruhig einige Schritte näher.)	(She calmly approaches a few steps.)
Wer kam in's Haus Und liegt dort am Herd ?	Who came to this house And lies at the hearth ?

As Siegmund remains motionless, she draws a little nearer and looks at him. Then she bends closer to him.

Noch schwilbt ihm der Athem ;	His breath still heaves,
Das Auge nur schloss er :	Though his lids be lowered.
Muthig dünkt mich der Mann,	Warlike and manful I deem him,
Sank er müd' auch hin.	Though, wearied, down he has sunk.

Siegmund suddenly raises his head and calls for a cooling draught. Sieglind takes a drinking-horn and returns with it filled with mead. She hands it to Siegmund with sympathetic words and gestures. He drinks and returns the horn to her, then gazes a long time on her countenance. They seem to become strongly and irresistibly attracted towards each other ; yet no words, only their glances full of interest and emotion, denote the expression of their feelings. Siegmund starts quickly as if to go away, but Sieglind asks why he will not tarry.

Siegmund.

Misswende folgt mir	Misfortune follows
Wohin ich fliehe :	Whither I fare ;
Misswende naht mir	Misfortune is near
Wo ich mich neige :	Where I am nigh ;
Dir, Frau, doch bleibe sie fern !	But far from thee be its fate !
Fort wend' ich Fuss und Blick.	Forth from here will I hie.

Siegmund walks quickly to the door and lifts the bolt. Sieglind with impetuous self-forgetfulness bids him to remain, and exclaims that he can bring no sorrow to the house in which sorrow already reigns. He halts, deeply moved, and gazes searchingly in Sieglind's countenance ; she at last casts down her eyes, abashed and sad. A long silence reigns in the hall. Siegmund returns and sits down, leaning against the hearth, determined to wait for Hunding's arrival. "The musical treatment of this scene is of great tenderness. A grave melody indicates the lonely sadness of the Volsung, but a motive of tenderest pathos expresses the feeling of love which at first sight unites the pair. It always appears in two parts, betokening thus the inseparable

duality of the emotion. Another love-motive of equal beauty belonging to this scene deserves mention as a specimen of that sustained melodiousness which of all Beethoven's followers Wagner alone shares with that master."

Sieglind remains in embarrassed silence. Footsteps are heard outside, while the music is gloomy, and ill-boding strains announce Hunding's return to his home. At the sound of the bugles Sieglind starts, listens, and hears how Hunding leads his horse to the stall; she hastily goes to the door and opens it. Hunding, armed with shield and spear, enters, but halts at the threshold as soon as he perceives Siegmund. Hunding casts a grave and searching glance at Sieglind in regard to the stranger, whom, however, he receives hospitably. While Sieglind hangs Hunding's weapons on the branches of the ash-tree and then places food and drink on the table for the evening meal, Hunding scans sharply and with astonishment Siegmund's features and compares them with those of his wife. He finds that they resemble each other, and the same glare flashes from their eyes; yet he conceals his surprise, and with seeming unconcern invites Siegmund to share the evening meal with him and Sieglind. Hunding proudly reveals his name to Siegmund, and boasts of his possessions and the great number of chieftains "who protect Hunding's honor." He then expresses the wish to know who his guest is. Siegmund, who in the mean time had seated himself at the table, looks thoughtfully before him. Sieglind, sitting opposite Siegmund, casts wondering and sympathetic glances at him.

Sieg lind.

(Unbefangen und theilnahmvol.) (Without embarrassment and sympathetically.)

Gast, wer du bist
Wüsst' ich gern.

Guest, thy name
I fain would know.

Sieg mund.

(Blickt auf, sieht ihr in das Auge, und beginnt ernst.) (Looks up, gazes into her eyes, and begins earnestly.)

Friedmund darf ich nicht heißen;

Frohwalt möcht' ich wohl sein.
Doch Wehwalt muss ich mich nennen.

Wolfe, der war mein Vater;
Zu zwei kam ich zur Welt,

Eine Zwillingsschwester und ich.

Früh schwanden mir Mutter und Maid.

Die mich gebar
Und die mit mir sie barg,

Kaum hab' ich sie je gekannt.—
Wehrlich und stark war Wolfe!
Der Feinde wuchsen ihm viel.

Zum Jagen zog
Mit dem Jungen der Alte;
Von Hetze und Harst
Einst kehrten sie heim:
Da lag das Wolfsnest leer;

Zu Schutt gebrannt
Der prangende Saal,

Friedmund * I cannot be called;
Frohwalt † fain would I be:
But Wehwalt ‡ I now must be named.

Wolf my father was;
At once to the light of the world

Awoke a sister and I.

Ere long both mother And maid I lost.
Her who bore me And her with whom I was born,

Hardly I ever beheld.—
Warlike and mighty was Wolf!
And many the foes that he felled.

To the hunt in the woods
Together we went;
From hurry and toil
When home we returned,
There lay the Wolf's nest waste!

A glowing heap
The glorious hall!

* Peaceful.

† Gleeful.

‡ Woful.

Zum Stumpf der Eiche
 Blühender Stamm ;
 Erschlagen der Mutter
 Muthiger Leib ;
 Verschwunden in Gluthen
 Der Schwester Spur.
 Uns schuf die herbe Noth

 Der Neidinge harte Schaar ;
 Geächtet floh
 Der Alte mit mir.
 Lange Jahre
 Lebte der Junge
 Mit Wolfe im wilden Wald.
 Manche Jagd
 Ward auf sie gemacht ;
 Doch muthig wehrte
 Das Wolfspaar sich.

(Zu Hunding gewendet.)

Ein Wölfig kündet dir das,
 Den als Wölfig mancher wohl
 kennt.

A stump the oak's
 Stalwart stem ;
 The fearless mother
 Fell in the fray ;
 In cinders was trampled
 The sister's trace.
 The fearful harm had been
 wrought
 By the hateful host of the foe.
 Harassed, the father
 Fled with the son.
 For many years
 The youngling remained
 With Wolf in forests wild.
 Many a hunt
 For their haunt was made ;
 But fearlessly fought
 The Wolves in the fight.

(Turning to Hunding.)

A Wolfig tells thee the tale, *
 Who as Wolfig is feared by his
 foes.

At Sieglind's request Siegmund relates more of his adventures, in one of which he was separated from his father, lost all trace of him, and only found a wolf's skin in the forest. He bewails his fate, since wherever he tarries he meets with ill-fortune, and this is the reason why he calls himself "Wehwalt." Woe alone is his lot. When Sieglind asks him how he lost his weapons, he recounts in a spirited manner the last conflict in which he had been engaged. Foiled in his attempt to rescue a maiden from the power of her enemies, he flees, after his spear and shield had been hewn in splinters, to Hunding's house, without knowing that he had slain,

though in self-defence, the kindred of his host, and that Hunding on the very same day had left his home to wreak vengeance on the unknown slayer of his friends. The sacred right of hospitality shields Siegmund for the night, but Hunding challenges him to deadly combat for the morrow.

Sieglind pensively takes a drinking-horn from the table, goes to a cupboard, from which she takes spices, and turns towards the side apartment at the left. Having reached the highest step by the door, she turns towards Siegmund, and her glance rests long and wistfully upon him. Suppressing his wrath, he calmly stands by the hearth, gazing on her alone. At last she directs his attention in a significant manner to a spot on the trunk of the ash-tree, which for a moment is illumined by the fitful blaze on the hearth. Hunding, who has become aware of her delay, commands her by a gesture to leave the hall, whereupon she disappears through the doorway, holding the horn in her hand. Hunding takes his weapons from the tree, and after reminding Siegmund again of the combat that is to take place on the following day, he enters the door of the inner apartment. Siegmund remains alone. Night has come. The hall is dimly illuminated by a faint fire on the hearth. Siegmund sinks down on the couch by the fire; he is greatly agitated, and for some time remains silent and brooding.

Siegmund.

Ein Schwert verhiess mir der A sword—so promised my
Vater, father—
Ich fänd' es in höchster Noth.— In sorest need I should find.—
Waffenlos fiel ich Weaponless falling

In Feindes Haus:	In the house of the foe,
Seiner Rache Pfand	Here in pledge
Rast' ich hier:	To his wrath I am held.
Ein Weib sah' ich	A woman I saw
Wonnig und hehr;	Bewitchingly sweet;
Entzückendes Bangen	My heart is rent
Zehret mein Herz;	With hallowed rapture;
Zu der mich nun Sehnsucht	For her I languish and long
zieht,	Who lured me to thrilling de-
Die mit süßem Zauber mich	light—
zehrt—	In thralldom holds her the
Im Zwange hält sie der Mann,	spouse,
Der mich—Wehrlosen—höhnt.	Who me—the weaponless—
Wälse! Wälse!	spurns.
Wo ist dein Schwert?	Välse! Välse!
Das starke Schwert,	Where is thy sword?
Das in Sturm ich schwänge?	The stalwart sword That in storm I would swing?

The embers of the fire fall together. The flickering flame lights up for a moment the spot on the ash-tree trunk which Sieglin'd's glance had indicated, and where the hilt of a sword becomes plainly visible. Siegmund gazes at the glistening object, but does not know what it is whose glow flashes before his eyes and momentarily rends the darkness in the hall. The music of the sword-motive resounds and apprises us of the meaning of the glittering light. Siegmund falls back into his reveries; the fire on the hearth is extinct: deep night. Sieglin'd softly enters from the inner apartment, and approaches Siegmund. She tells him to flee and avail himself of the darkness of the night for his safety. Then she points to the hilt of the sword, and relates how at Hunding's wedding feast, while she was sad and the warriors kept up their carousals, an old man

entered the hall, clad in gray raiment, his hat slouched down, hiding one of his eyes. He glared at the astonished crowd, and swinging a sword in his hand, he thrust it deep into the ash-tree's trunk. To him alone the weapon should belong who was able to draw it from the tree. Many had dared to try their strength, but not one had succeeded.* "From the Valhall Motive accompanying her tale we know that this stranger was Wotan himself who thus left the sword for his son in his highest need."

Sieglinde tells Siegmund how she knows for whom the sword is destined. She sees in him the hero that can release her from the unbearable life with a hated and tyrannical husband. Siegmund ardently embraces her, and assures her that he is the one to whom weapon and wife are to belong. All at once the large door in the background has sprung back as if by magic, and remains wide open; a charming night of spring-time is revealed outside; the moon sheds her light on them both and the surrounding objects. Gazing on the beautiful spectacle, and drawing Sieglinde towards him, Siegmund is heard in the peerless Love-song or Spring-song:

Winterstürme wichen
Dem Wonnemond,
Im milden Lichte
Leuchtet der Lenz,
Auf lauen Lüften
Lind und lieblich,
Wunder webend
Er sich wiegt;

Winter-storms have waned
'Fore winsome May,
In gentle blaze
Blushes the Spring.
On languid breezes,
Light and lovely,
Wonders weaving
He wends his way;

* See page 47.

Ueber Wald und Auen	Over wood and meadows
Weht sein Athem,	Waves his breath,
Weit geöffnet	Widely opened
Lacht sein Aug'.	Laughs his eye.
Aus sel'ger Vöglein Sange	In song of happy birds
Süss er tönt.	He sweetly sings.
Holdeste Düfte	Lovely fragrance
Haucht er aus ;	Flows from his lips.
Seinem warmen Blut entblühen	His blood is warming the blooming,
Wonnige Blumen,	Winsomest blossoms.
Keim und Spross	Germ and sprout
Entspriesst seiner Kraft.	Spring from his might.
Mit zarter Waffen Zier	With dainty weapons' sway
Bezwingt er die Welt.	Subdues he the world.
Winter und Sturm wichen	Winter and storm have waned
Der starken Wehr :	'Fore his warlike gear.
Wohl musste den tapfern Strei- chen	To the strokes of his dauntless strength
Die strenge Thüre auch wei- chen,	The stalwart door had to yield,
Die trotzig und starr	That stubborn and hard
Uns—trennte von ihm.	Withheld us from him.
Zu seiner Schwester	Hitherward fleetly
Schwang er sich her ;	He flew to his sister ;
Die Liebe lockte den Lenz ;	By Love was lured the Spring ;
In uns'rem Busen	Deep in our hearts
Barg sie sich tief.	She long lay hidden.
Nun lacht sie selig dem Licht.	She hails now, laughing, the light.
Die bräutliche Schwester	The bride and the sister
Befreite der Bruder !	Is freed by the brother.
Zertrümmert liegt	To pieces is dashed
Was sie getrennt ;	What held them apart.
Jauchzend grüsst sich	With greatest rapture
Das junge Paar :	They greet each other :
Vereint sind Liebe und Lenz !	United are Love and Spring !

Sieglinde answers with tender and glowing passion, and faint memories of a nearly forgotten past dawn upon them. Siegmund springs to the ash-tree and seizes the hilt of the sword.

Siegmund.

Siegmund heiss' ich,	Siegmund I'm hight,
Und Siegmund bin ich ;	And Siegmund I am,
Bezeug' es dies Schwert,	As proves the sword
Das zaglos ich halte !	That, dauntless, I seize.
Wälse verhiess mir,	Välse had vowed,
In höchster Noth	In direful venture
Sollt' ich es finden :	The sword I should have.
Ich fass' es nun !	I hold it now.
Heiligster Minne	Sorest pang
Höchste Noth,	Of passion most sacred,
Sehnender Liebe	Relentless woe
Zehrende Noth,	Of languishing love,
Brennt mir hell in der Brust,	Flash their flames through my breast,
Drängt mich zu That und Tod ;	Drive me to deeds and death !
Nothung ! Nothung !	Nothung ! Nothung !
So nenn' ich dich Schwert.	So name I the sword !
Nothung ! Nothung !	Nothung ! Nothung !
Neidlicher Stahl !	Terrific steel !
Zeig' deiner Schärfe	Blazon thy trenchant,
Schneidenden Zahn :	Keen-edged blade !
Heraus aus der Scheide zu mir !	Out from thy sheath unto me !

With a strong wrench he draws the sword out of the tree-trunk and displays it before Sieglinde, who is overcome with joy and wonder.

Siegmund, den Wälsung,
Siehst du, Weib !
Als Brautgabe
Bringt er dies Schwert ;

Siegmund, the Volsung,
Seest thou beside thee !
For bridal gift
He brings thee this sword.

So freit er sich
 Die seligste Frau ;
 Dem Feindeshaus
 Entführt er dich so.
 Fern von hier
 Folge ihm nun,
 Fort in des Lenzes
 Lachendes Haus :
 Dort schützt dich Nothung, das
 Schwert,
 Wenn Siegmund dir liebend er-
 lag !

He wooes with the blade
 The blissfullest wife.
 From the house of the foe
 He hies with thee.
 Forth from here
 Follow him far,
 Hence to the laughing
 House of the Spring,
 Where Nothung the sword de-
 fends thee,
 When Siegmund infolds thee
 in love !

Siegmund puts his arms around Sieglind to take her with him.

Sieglind.

Bist du Siegmund,
 Den ich hier sehe ?—
 Sieglinde bin ich,
 Die dich ersehnt :
 Die eig'ne Schwester
 Gewannst du zueins mit dem
 Schwert !

Art thou Siegmund
 I see beside me ?—
 Sieglind am I,
 Sighing for thee.
 And so thy sister
 Hast won at once with the
 sword !

Siegmund.

Braut und Schwester
 Bist du dem Brüder—
 So blühe denn Wälsungen
 Blut !

Bride and sister
 Art thou to the brother—
 So bloom then the Volsungs'
 blood !

Siegmund draws her with glowing passion towards him, and she sinks on his breast with a cry. So closes the first act of the "Walküre."

The love-scene between Siegmund and Sieglind has often furnished an opportunity to Wagner's opponents for attacking the "Walküre," and even the whole "Ring

of the Nibelung." In the first place, it must be borne in mind that Wagner did not invent the incident, but adapted it from the Volsunga Saga.* Moreover, it forms in his composition the ideal garb in which the awakening of Love by the approach of Spring is represented. Again, it must be said that Siegmund and Sieglind love each other before they are aware of their relationship. It is only at the last moment when Sieglind reveals her name to Siegmund that they know each other with full certainty as brother and sister. Their passion seems increased by the delusive idea that, the fate of the Volsungs being at stake, their race can be perpetuated only by the union of the last survivors of the once powerful family. The crime thus accomplished is not excused in the drama, but, as we shall see, is quickly and terribly punished. Franz Hueffer says, in regard to the marriage of Siegmund and Sieglind : "It should, moreover, be remembered that we are not dealing with ordinary men and women, but with the children of a god—mythical beings, that is, who have hardly yet emerged from the stage of natural forces. Who has ever been shocked at the amours of the Greek divinities on account of their being within the forbidden degrees of relationship, or at the intermarriage of the children of Adam and Eve which the Pentateuch implies?"

In the second act of the "Walküre" the scene represents a wild rocky mountain-chain. Wotan appears clad in warlike garb, holding the spear in his hand. Before him stands Brunhild, as Valkyr, also completely armed. Wotan bids Brunhild prepare for strife and

* See page 47.

bestow victory on Siegmund against Hunding in the coming fray. Brunhild gladly listens to Wotan's behest, and, shouting and springing from rock to rock, while the "Valkyr Motive" resounds with its wild "Hoyotoho!" she finally disappears behind the heights. Fricka, in a chariot drawn by two rams, comes forth from the ravine. On the ridge she quickly alights and walks impetuously towards Wotan.

Fricka.

Ich vernahm Hunding's Noth,	Hunding's lament I have learned,
Um Rache rief er mich an :	Vengeance aloud he demands;
Der Ehe Hüterin	As wedlock's warder
Hörte ihn,	I heard his wish;
Verhiess streng	I vowed to doom
Zu strafen die That	To vengeance dire
Des frech frevelnden Paars,	The fierce, nefarious pair
Das kühn den Gatten gekränkt.	That harshly the husband has hurt.

Wotan vainly endeavors to calm Fricka's wrath. She sternly upbraids him for his duplicity; and when he asks her, as the patroness of marriage, to bless Siegmund's and Sieglind's love, her indignation knows no limits. She tells him that he always has deceived her and broken the oath of holy wedlock. Her greatest sorrow is to see him go forth to battle with the Valkyrs, the daughters of Erda and Wotan. She does not believe nor comprehend him when he says that a hero free from the protection of the gods can alone accomplish the deed that will redeem them from the Nibelung curse; this cannot be done by the gods, although it is most needful to their welfare. Fricka apprises Wotan

that she knows full well his intentions in regard to Siegmund, his son. She is aware of the fact that Wotan had thrust the sword into the trunk of the ash-tree so that the Volsung, hateful to her, might find it. At last Fricka extorts from Wotan the promise that he will not protect Siegmund in the approaching conflict. At the same time the exulting Valkyr cry is heard, and Brunhild, Wotan's most beloved daughter, is seen on the rocky pathway with her steed. Her appearance reminds Wotan of the command he had given her to bestow victory on Siegmund.

Fricka.

Deiner ew'gen Gattin	Thy holy wife's
Heilige Ehre	High renown
Schirme heut' ihr Schild !	Be sheltered to-day by her shield !
Von Menschen verlacht,	Derided by men,
Verlustig der Macht,	Bereft of might,
Gingen wir Götter zu Grund,	We gods were fated to fall,
Würde heut' nicht hehr	Were not high to-day
Und herrlich mein Recht	My holy right
Gerächt von der muthigen Maid.—	Avenged by the valiant maid !—
Der Wälsung fällt meiner Ehre :—	The Volsung shall fall as my victim ;—
Empfah' ich von Wotan den Eid ?—	Win I from Wotan the oath ?—

Wotan in inward rage and fearful dejection casts himself on a seat on the rocks. Fricka receives his oath, and Siegmund is thus doomed to death. Brunhild, perceiving Fricka, leads her horse slowly down the rocky path. She takes it to a cavern, while Fricka returning to her chariot passes by. Brunhild, aston-

ished and anxious, approaches Wotan, who, reclining on the rocky seat, his head resting on his hand, is absorbed in gloomy brooding over his weakness. As Brunhild asks him what causes him such grief, he gives vent to his wrath and despair. Her affectionate words arouse him for a short time from his brooding grief, and call to his mind that she is dearest to him of all his daughters. She says: "Who am I, if not Wotan's will?" and he replies: "With myself I take counsel when I speak to thee." Thereupon, in a low voice and intently gazing into her eyes, he relates the story of the Rhine-maidens and Alberich, already told in the preceding pages.* He further tells her that he had relied on the aid of the Valkyrs. Once he descended to Erda's abode in the bowels of the earth, determined to learn from her the fate of the gods. By means of a love-charm he overcame her, the all-knowing Vala, and the Valkyrs were born to him, of whom Brunhild is the wisest. By the help of the war-like sisters who lead the heroes slain in battle to Valhall, Wotan had hoped to avert the threatened overthrow of the gods; but Alberich's host he now fears; for if ever again the Nibelung should win the ring, Valhall would be doomed. None can resist its magic power. Fafnir, Wotan continues, now guards the hoard; but the god cannot wrest it from him, since, by the treaty he had made with the giants for building Valhall, the ring and the hoard had come into Fafnir's possession after the murder of Fasolt, his brother.† Only that hero can save the gods from destruction

* See Chapter IV.

† See page III.

who, without their behest, of his own motion dares achieve the deed that is dearest to Wotan's wish, though it cannot be accomplished by him. Wotan despairs of finding such a champion; and moreover he knows the end is fast approaching.

Wotan.

(In wilden Schmerz der Verzweiflung ausbrechend.)

Ich berührte Alberich's ring—
Gierig hielt ich das Gold !
Der Fluch, den ich floh,
Nicht flieht er nun mich :—
Was ich liebe, muss ich ver-
lassen,
Morden was je ich minne,

Trügend verrathen
Wer mir vertraut !
Fahre denn hin,
Herrische Pracht,
Göttlichen Prunkes
Prahlende Schmach !
Zusammen breche
Was ich gebaut !
Auf geb' ich meine Werke,
Eines nur will ich noch,
 Das Ende—
 Das Ende—

(Er hält sinnend ein.)

Und für das Ende
Sorgt Alberich !
Jetzt versteh' ich
Den stummen Sinn
Des wilden Wortes der Wala :

(In an outburst of wild despair.)

For Alberich's ring I reached
In raging greed of the gold.
The curse, that I fled from,
From me will not flee.
What I love I must lose and
forsake,
And doom to death what I
long for,
By falsely betraying
Who trusts in my faith !
Begone, then, and perish,
Thou gorgeous pomp,
Thou glittering disgrace
Of godhood's grandeur !
Asunder shall burst
The walls I built !
My work I abandon,
For one thing alone I wish—

The end—
The end—

(He pauses in thought.)

And to the end
Alb'rich attends !
Now I conceive
The secret sense
Of the Vala's bewildering
word :

“ Wenn der Liebe finstrer Feind	“ When Love's ferocious foe
Zürnend zeugt einen Sohn, Der Seligen Ende Säumt dann nicht !”	In rage begetteth a son, The night of the gods Draws near anon !”
Vom Nib'lung jüngst Vernalim ich die Mähr', Dass ein Weib der Zwerg be- wältigt,	Of the Nibelung lately The tiding I learned, That the dwarf a woman had wooed,
Dess Gunst Gold ihm erzwang.	Whose guerdon he won for his gold.
Des Hasses Frucht Hegt eine Frau ; Des Neides Kraft Kreisst ihr im Schooss .	A woman hoards The fruit of hate ; The strength of spite Spreads in her womb :
Das Wunder gelang Dem Liebelosen : Doch der in Liebe ich freite, Den Freien erlang' ich mir nie !	The wonder was wrought By the loveless rogue : But I who, loving, have wooed, The free one I never have won !

Wotan, in despair, tells Brunhild of the promise he had made to Fricka, and commands her to give the victory to Hunding. Brunhild beseeches Wotan to take back his word, as she knows that the god in his innermost heart loves the Volsung. Yet Wotan leaves her, threatening dire punishment if his will be not obeyed. She sadly gathers up her weapons and disappears. Sieglinde enters, as though in great haste, closely followed by Siegmund. Their coming is announced by melodious strains, recalling the former love-scene. Sieglinde is pursued by a wild fear of the consequences of her deed. Siegmund tries to calm her apprehensions; suddenly she throws herself passionately on his breast, but a moment after she starts up and seems to listen.

Sieglind.

Horch ! Die Hörner—
 Hörst du den Ruf ?
 Ringsher tönt
 Wüthend Getös' ;
 Aus Wald und Gau
 Gellt es herauf.
 Hunding erwachte
 Von hartem Schlaf ;
 Sippen und Hunde
 Ruft er zusammen.
 Muthig gehetzt
 Heult die Meute,
 Wild bellt sie zum Himmel
 Um der Ehe gebrochenen Eid !

(Sie lacht wie wahnsinnig auf, dann
 schrickt sie ängstlich zusammen.)

Wo bist du, Siegmund ?
 Seh' ich dich noch ?
 Brünstig geliebter,
 Leuchtender Bruder !
 Deines Auges Stern
 Lass noch einmal mir strahlen :

Wehre dem Kuss
 Des verworf'nen Weibes nicht !
 Horch ! O horch !
 Das ist Hunding's Horn !
 Seine Meute naht
 Mit mächtiger Wehr.
 Kein Schwert frommt
 Vor der Hunde Schwall :—
 Wirf es fort, Siegmund !
 Siegmund, wo bist du ?
 Ha, dort—ich sehe dich—
 Schrecklich Gesicht !—

Hark ! the horns—
 Hear'st thou the blast ?
 All around us
 Wild uproar !
 From field and forest
 Furious yells !
 Hunding awoke
 From slumber hard ;
 Kinsmen and hounds
 To the hunt he calls.
 Set on by him
 Howleth the pack,
 Wildly barking to heaven
 O'er wedlock's broken bond !

(She laughs as if beside herself ; then
 cowers down in terror.)

Where art thou, Siegmund ?
 See I thee still ?
 Intensely belovèd,
 Loftiest brother !
 The glow of thine eye
 Once more let gleam on my
 gloom :
 O ward not off
 The worthless woman's kiss !
 Hark ! O hark !
 It is Hunding's horn !
 His pack approaches
 Eager for prey.
 No sword can help
 'Gainst the host of the hounds :
 Cast it off, Siegmund !
 Siegmund, where art thou ?
 Ha, there—I behold thee—
 Horrid the sight !

Rüden fletschen	Hounds are gnashing
Die Zähne nach Fleisch :	Their teeth as they near.
Sie achten nicht	No longer they reck
Deines edlen Blicks ;	Thy lofty mien.
Bei den Füssen packt dich	To thy feet they cling
Das feste Gebiss—	With the clinch of their fangs.
Du fällst—	Thou fallest—
In Stücken zerstaucht das Schwert—	Asunder is shattered the sword—
Die Esche stürzt—	The ash-tree falls—
Es bricht der Stamm !	Broken's the stem !
Bruder ! mein Bruder !	Brother ! my brother !
Siegmund—ha !	Siegmund—ha !

With a cry of anguish Sieglind falls unconscious in Siegmund's arms. He listens to hear if she breathes, and, convinced that she is still alive, places her in a sitting posture, so that, as he now himself sits down, her head rests upon his knee. There is a long silence, while Siegmund bends over Sieglind with tender care. Brunhild, leading her horse by the bridle, approaches and remains standing in front of Siegmund. In grave silence she gazes on him for some time. Siegmund and Sieglind retain their position as long as Brunhild is present, while the music depicts their love and sorrow in sad sweetness. The following scene is one of the most beautiful and pathetic in the whole drama, its effect being heightened by the sublime music accompanying it.

Brunhild.

Siegmund—	Siegmund—
Sieh' auf mich ?	Seest thou me ?
Ich—bin's,—	Me—soon—
Der bald—du folgst.	Must—thou follow.

Sieg mund.

(Richtet den Blick zu ihr auf.)

(Looks up at her.)

Wer bist du, sag',
Die so schön und ernst mir er-
scheint ?

Who art thou,—speak,—
Of aspect so fair and stern ?

Brunhild.

Nur Todgeweihten
Taugt mein Anblick.
Wer mich erschaut,
Der scheidet vom Lebenslicht.
Auf der Walstatt allein
Erschein' ich Edlen :
Wer mich gewahrt,
Zur Wal kor ich ihn mir.

Who's fated to die
Alone sees my face.
Who gazes on me
Foregoes the light of his life.
In the heat of the fray
Heroes behold me ;
Who spies my glance,
To death is doomed by my
spear.

Sieg mund.

(Blickt ihr lange in das Auge, senkt
dann sinnend das Haupt, und wen-
det sich endlich mit feierlichem
Ernst wieder zu ihr.)

(He looks her in the eye for some
time, then drops his head in
thought. At last, with solemn
earnestness, he turns again to her.)

Der dir nun folgt,
Wohin führst du den Helden ?

Where leav'st thou,—speak,—
The hero who falls by thy
spear ?

Brunhild.

Zu Walvater
Der dich gewählt,
Führ' ich dich :
Nach Walhall folgst du mir !

To Valfather,
Who chose thy fate,
I lead thee forth :
To Valhall follow me !

Sieg mund.

In Walhall's Saal
Walvater find' ich allein ?

In Valhall's halls
Find I Valfather alone ?

Brunhild.

Gefallner Helden
Hehre Schaar

The fallen heroes'
Faithful host

Umfängt dich hold
Mit hoch-heiligem Gruss. Will hail thee with grace
And greeting holy and high.

Siegmund.

Fänd' ich in Walhall
Wälse, den eignen Vater? Find I in Valhall
Välse, the Volsung's father?

Brunhild.

Den Vater findet
Der Wälsung dort. His father there
The Volsung shall find.

Siegmund.

Grüssst mich in Walhall
Froh eine Frau? Greets me a woman
Gladly in Valhall?

Brunhild.

Wunschnädelchen
Walten dort hehr:
Wotan's Tochter
Reicht dir traulich den Trank. Wish-maidens *
Rule there with might:
Wotan's daughter
Winningly gives thee to drink.

Siegmund.

Hehr bist du:
Heilig gewahr' ich
Das Wotanskind:
Doch eines sag' mir, du Ew'ge!
Begleitet den Bruder
Die bräutliche Schwester?
Umfängt Siegmund
Sieglinde dort? Hallowed art thou:
Wotan's daughter
Holy I deem:
But tell me, goddess eternal!
The brother will see
The bride and the sister?
Will Siegmund embrace
Siegelind there?

At Brunhild's reply that Sieglind and Siegmund will not meet in Valhall, Siegmund exclaims:

So grüsse mir Walhall,	Then greet for me Valhall,
Grüsse mir Wotan,	Greet for me Wotan;
Grüsse mir Wälse,	Hail unto Välse,

* See page 31.

Und alle Helden— And all the heroes !
Grüss' auch die holden Greet, too, the graceful
Wunschesmädchen : Warlike wish-maidens :
Zu ihnen folg' ich dir nicht. For now I follow thee not.

Brunhild is deeply moved by Siegmund's words, although she does not comprehend how he can prefer the woful sister and bride to the joys of Valhall. Her sympathy with the forlorn hero increases, and, fully aware of Wotan's secret wish, she bids Siegmund prepare for the fray, promising to turn the fate of the battle and bestow the victory on him. She hastily disappears, and Siegmund joyfully gazes after her. Heavy thunder-clouds descending in the background, and the distant sound of horns, which is heard gradually nearer and nearer, announce the approaching contest. Siegmund bends over Sieglind, who still appears to be asleep, and hastens towards the background to encounter Hunding. Sieglind dreams of the destruction of her father's house, but is suddenly awakened by terrific peals of thunder. On all sides the blast of the horns resounds amidst lightning and thunder. She gazes about her in terror. Hunding's voice is heard, and soon after Siegmund's. The two warriors encounter each other; a flash of lightning for a moment illuminates the rock on which they fight. Sieglind is about to rush towards the combatants, but draws back at a sudden burst of light, in the midst of which Brunhild becomes visible, protecting Siegmund with her shield. Brunhild urges Siegmund on to trust to his sword; but just as he is about to fell Hunding to the ground, a glowing red light breaks through the clouds. In it Wotan appears, standing over Hunding,

and stretches his spear across Siegmund's weapon. The latter breaks asunder, and Siegmund falls, pierced by Hunding's sword. Brunhild, amazed, withdraws from Wotan's sight, raises Sieglind from the ground, and disappears with her. Wotan, leaning on his spear, looks mournfully on Siegmund's corpse. By a disdainful wave of his hand Hunding falls lifeless to the ground. Wotan, in fearful rage, threatens to punish Brunhild's disobedience. Thus closes the second act of the "Walküre." For the sake of the ring Wotan destroys his own beloved children, the Volsungs Siegmund and Sieglind. Their death atones for their guilt, and Wotan, in despair, relinquishes his plan; he waits for the "end of the gods."

The third act of the "Walküre" represents a scene of uncommon beauty and interest. To the right appears the beginning of a forest of fir-trees; to the left opens the entrance to a cavern in the rocks. Above this the cliffs attain their highest point; towards the background huge rocks are supposed to lead towards a steep abyss. Clouds, driven by the storm, sweep by the mountains. The region is the gathering-place of the Valkyrs, the so-called "Walküren Stein," or rock of the Valkyrs. At the rise of the curtain four of the Valkyrs are seen on the point of a rock near and above the cavern. With helmet, shield and spear, and glittering coat of mail over the long flowing dress, they await the coming of their sisters. A sudden blaze of lightning flashes through one of the clouds passing by, and in it is seen a Valkyr on horseback, the form of a slain warrior hanging across her saddle. Again a flash of lightning displays another Valkyr, until at last eight

of the nine are assembled. Laughingly they greet each other and glory in their warlike deeds. The music plays the famous "Ride of the Valkyrs," portraying their wild flight through the air, the clash of arms, the neighing of the steeds and the laughter of the maidens, while the exulting Valkyr cry "Hoyotoho!" resounds from the lips of the warrior-maids.

Suddenly in a glowing light in the sky Brunhild is espied by her sisters. She rides at furious speed, and, to the amazement of the other Valkyrs, instead of a dead hero carries a woman—Sieglind—on her horse Grani. As she comes upon the scene, supporting and leading Sieglind, she is surrounded by her sisters, but she hardly listens to their joyous greeting. In haste she relates to them the events connected with Siegmund's death; and as she is aware of Wotan's wrath, she asks them for a fresh steed so that she may escape by flight the pursuit of the enraged god. They all refuse, appalled at Brunhild's disobedience to Wotan's command, and dreading his vengeance if they should comply with their sister's request. As Brunhild implores them to save at least Sieglind, the latter, who has been staring in gloomy thought before her, at once starts up and conjures Brunhild to thrust the sword into her heart. Siegmund being slain, she yearns for death. But when Brunhild tells her that she carries a pledge of Siegmund's love—a true Volsung—she appears at first amazed and then suddenly enraptured. Then she implores the Valkyrs to save her for the sake of the child. In the mean time a dreadful storm arises in the distance; peals of thunder reverberate, announcing wrathful Wotan's ride and approach. Brunhild

resolves to await his arrival and suffer the penalty of her crime, but she urges Sieglind to flee at once. To the east a forest extends where Fafnir, the giant, in the shape of a dragon guards the Nibelung hoard and ring. There, and there alone, Sieglind is safe from Wotan's fury, as the god never draws nigh the ill-fated wood. Brunhild indicates to Sieglind the way to the forest.

Brunhild.

Fort denn, eile	Off, then, hie thee
Nach Osten gewandt !	And haste to the east !
Muthigen Trotzes	Fearlessly dare
Ertrag alle Müh'n—	And defy all dangers,—
Hunger und Durst,	Hunger and thirst,
Dorn und Gestein ;	The thorns and the rocks ;
Lache, ob Noth	Laugh at the need
Und Leiden dich nagt !	And pain that may gnaw thee !
Denn eines wisse	For one thing know
Und wahr' es immer :	And never forget :
Den hehrsten Helden der Welt	The highest hero on earth
Hegst du, O Weib,	Shall be—Sieglind
Im schirmenden Schoos !—	And Siegmund's—child !
(Sie reicht ihr die Stücken von Sieg- mund's zerbrochenem Schwert.)	(She hands her the fragments of Sieg- mund's sword.)
Verwahr' ihm die starken	Save for thy son
Schwertes-Stücken ;	The broken sword !
Seines Vaters Walstatt	Where his father fell
Entführt ich sie glücklich :	On the field I found it.
Der neu gefügt	Who welds it anew .
Das Schwert einst schwingt,	And waves it again,
Den Namen nehm' er von mir—	His name he gains from me now—
" Siegfried " freu' sich des	" Siegfried " the hero be hailed!*
Sieg's !	

* See page 60, note *.

Sieglind in ecstatic joy thanks Brunhild, and wends her way to the forest. After she leaves, the summits of the rocks are shrouded in black thunder-clouds. Amidst a fearful storm a lurid blaze illumines the fir-wood. Between the peals of thunder Wotan's voice, calling for Brunhild, is heard. The Valkyrs mount to the point of the rock, concealing Brunhild in their midst. Wotan, having left his steed, comes in great anger out of the wood and stops in front of the group of Valkyrs, who in vain endeavor to appease his wrath. Brunhild is still hidden by them.

Wotan.

Hörst du's, Brünnhilde ?	Hearest thou, Brunhild,
Du, der ich Brünne,	To whom the hauberk,
Helm und Wehr,	Helmet and weapons,
Wonne und Huld,	And winning grace,
Namen und Leben verlieh ?	Glory and life I gave ?
Hörst du mich Klage erheben,	Hearest thou how I arraign thee,
Und birgst dich bang dem	Yet shyly thou shunnest my
Kläger,	wrath,
Dass feig' du der Straf' ent-	In dastardly dread of thy
flöh'st ?	doom ?

Brunhild steps forth from amid the other Valkyrs, descends with humble mien but with firm tread from the height of the cliffs, and approaches Wotan in order to hear his command. He tells her that she herself has brought her fate down upon her, and, to the horror of her sisters, announces that she has ceased to be Wish-maid and Shield-maid ; in short, she is no longer one of the Valkyrs.

Wotan.

Nicht send' ich dich mehr aus Walhall,	No more from Valhall I send thee;
Nicht weis' ich dir mehr Helden zur Wal;	Thy fate is no more With heroes to fight,
Nicht führst du mehr Sieger In meinen Saal:	Or show to the warriors The way to my hall.
Bei der Götter traulichem Mahle	At the hallowed meal of the gods
Das Trinkhorn reichst du Mir traut nicht mehr;	No more shalt thou hand me The horn of mead;
Nicht kos' ich dir mehr Den kindischen Mund.	No more thy lips I'll lovingly kiss.
Von göttlicher Schaar Bist du geschieden,	From Asgard's* host Thou art thrust out,—
Ausgestossen, Aus der Ewigen Stamm;	Cast off from the race Of the Aesir † eternal;
Gebrochen ist unser Bund; Aus meinem Angesicht bist du	Asunder is broken our bond; And banished thou art from my sight!

Then Wotan pronounces the fearful penalty: on the cliff where she stands she shall sink into sleep, and to the man who shall find and awake her she shall be given in marriage. Him she must obey, and sit and spin in his house. The other Valkyrs are appalled at the disgrace that threatens their sister, and offer to share the same fate with her; but Wotan bids them leave the rock at once and shun it forever, lest in his wrath he inflict dire punishment on all of them. Brunhild has fallen with a shriek at Wotan's feet; her sisters disperse with wild cries of woe, and in hasty flight rush to the forest. Soon afterwards they are heard as if riding away at furious speed. The storm gradually ceases, the clouds vanish, and anon calm night enshrouds

* The castle of the gods. † The dwellers of Asgard, or the gods.

the scene. After a long silence, Brunhild, slowly raising her head, tries to meet Wotan's averted glance, and then gradually rises from the ground. In most pathetic words she entreats the god not to disgrace his once favorite daughter, as he would thus dishonor himself. She begs and conjures him not to let her become the booty of the cowardly wayfarer who may chance to meet her and awake her from her sleep. One request the god must grant to his most beloved child: fearful terrors shall frighten the dastard away from her rocky abode, so that none but the most dauntless hero will endeavor to approach her and interrupt her sleep. Wotan begins to be moved by her prayer, and his heart beats as of old with love for his daughter. She clings to him and wildly exclaims:

Auf dein Gebot	At thy behest
Entbrenne ein Feuer;	A holy fire
Den Fels umglühe	Shall enfold the rock
Lodernde Gluth.	In raging flames,
Es leck' ihre Zunge	To lick with their tongues
Und fresse ihr Zahn	And tear with their teeth
Den Zagen der frech es wagte	The coward who rashly may come
Dem freislichen Felsen zu	The terrific rock to approach.
nah'n	

Wotan.

(Blickt ihr ergriffen lange in's Auge.)	(Deeply affected, gazes long into her eyes.)
Leb' wohl, du kühnes Herrliches Kind !	Farewell, thou charming, Warlike child !
Du meines Herzens Heiliger Stolz,	Thou, my heart's Holiest pride !
Leb' wohl! Leb' wohl! Leb'	Farewell ! Farewell ! Farewell !
wohl !	

Muss ich dich meiden,	Must I forsake thee,
Und darf minnig	And may I no more
Mein Gruss nimmer dich grüs-	Hail thee with hallowèd love?
sen;	
Sollst du nicht mehr	Shalt thou no more
Neben mir reiten,	Ride with me,
Noch Meth beim Mahl mir	Nor hand me the horn at the
reichen;	feast?
Muss ich verlieren	Must I then lose thee,
Dich, die ich liebte,	Thee whom I loved,
Du lachende Lust meines	Thou laughing delight of mine
Auges:—	eyes?—
Ein bräutliches Feuer	A bridal fire
Soll dir nun brennen,	Shall blaze around thee,
Wie nie einer Braut es ge-	As ne'er for bride it has
brannt!	blazed!
Flammende Gluth	Sheaths of flame
Umglühe den Fels!	Shall enshroud the rock,
Mit zehrenden Schrecken	And with terrors tremendous
Scheuch' es den Zagen,	Dismay the timid!
Der Feige fliehe	Brunhild's castle
Brünnhilde's Fels:	The coward shall fear.
Denn einer nur freie die Braut,	To win her but one is fated—
Der freier als ich, der Gott.	Who's freer than I, the god!

Brunhild, overwhelmed with emotion and delight, throws herself into Wotan's arms. From the depths of his heart he bids her again a most affectionate farewell. He then kisses her on both eyes, which at once are closed and she sinks into sleep. He carries her to a low and soft mossy spot, over which a large fir-tree spreads its branches, and tenderly lays her down. Again he gazes long and mournfully on her features, closes the visor of her helmet, and once more casts a sorrowful glance on his beloved daughter. He covers her body with her long shield, and then ap-

proaches the huge rock, turning the point of his spear towards it.

Wotan.

Loge, hör !	Loki, hark !
Lausche hieher !	Hitherward list !
Wie zuerst ich dich fand	As at first I found thee
Als feurige Gluth,	In glowing fire,
Wie dann einst du mir schwanden dest	As once thou fleddest
Als schweifende Lohe :	In flickering flame,
Wie ich dich band,	As then I held thee,
Bann' ich dich heut !	I hold thee to-day !
Herauf, wabernde Lohe,	Arise, thou wavering fire,
Umlodre mir feurig den Fels !	Enwrap in thy flame the rock !
Loge ! Loge ! Hieher !	Loki ! Loki ! Arise !

At the last conjuration he strikes the rock three times with the point of his spear, whereupon a stream of fire bursts forth which swiftly swells to a sea of flames. With the point of his spear he indicates the direction of the flames until they describe a complete circle around the rock. Then he exclaims: "Who fears the point of my spear shall never stride through the fiery stream." He disappears in the flames toward the background.

Sweet, enrapturing strains accompany the sinking of Brunhild into her long sleep, from which she is to be awakened by Siegfried, Siegmund and Sieglind's son. With the first stream of flames, the famous "Fire Charm" resounds from the orchestra, imitating in a wonderful manner the flaming, sparkling, leaping and dancing play of the fire. Thus closes the third and last act of the "Walküre."

CHAPTER VI.

SIEGFRIED.

HENCEFORTH Wotan in the guise of a wanderer roams through the world. He is hardly more than a witness of the events which he knows will come to pass. He is fully aware of the approaching end of the gods. Sieg- lind, weary and worn, yet upheld by Brunhild's prophecy, had dragged herself to the forest where Fafnir lay in the shape of a dragon, guarding the Nibelung hoard and the ring. There, dying, she gave birth to Siegfried, whom Mime, the Nibelung, Alberich's brother, brings up in the hope that the youth will slay Fafnir and thus obtain the ring for him. From a comparison of the Nibelung traditions with Wagner's "Siegfried" it will become evident that the composer has more closely adhered to the ancient sagas in this than in any other drama of the "Ring." In their leading incidents Siegfried's youth and adventures with the smith in the forest correspond to the tales in the "Thidrek Saga" and in the "Lied vom Hürnen Seyfried,"* while, on the other hand, the events attending the slaying of the dragon and the awakening of Brunhild are depicted in the drama according to the Elder Edda and the Volsunga Saga.† The *dramatis personæ* in "Siegfried" are Mime, the Wanderer (Wotan), Alberich, Fafnir, Erda, Brunhild and Siegfried.

* See pages 43, 44, 51, 52.

† See pages 56-64.

"Wagner's 'Siegfried' is the apotheosis of youth. Everything in it is young and fresh, from the hero to the little bird of the forest, whose language is no secret to one brought up in immediate contact with nature." In the first act the scene represents a forest. The foreground is formed by part of a rock cavern which towards the left extends deeper inward, but towards the right fills nearly three quarters of the stage. Two entrances formed by nature face the forest. Against the back wall of the entrance at the left stands a large natural forge, formed of pieces of rock: the huge bellows are all that is artificial. A rude chimney goes up through the roof of the rock. A very large anvil, and other smith's utensils, are visible. After a brief orchestral prelude, recalling the gloomy Nibelung Motive, the curtain rises, and Mime is seen sitting at the anvil and, with growing uneasiness, hammering at a sword; at last in bad humor he stops in his work.

Mime.

Zwangvolle Plage !	Tiresome task !
Müh' ohne Zweck !	Aimless toil !
Das beste Schwert,	The mightiest sword
Das je ich geschweisst,	That ever I made,
In der Riesen Fäusten	In the giants' hands
Hielte es fest :	Fast it would hold ;
Doch dem ich's geschmiedet,	But the reckless wight
Der schmähliche Knabe,	For whom I have wrought it
Er knickt und schmeisst es ent-	Will bend it and break it in
zwei,	two,
Als schüf' ich Kinderge-	Like a toy for boyhood's dis-
schmeid !—	play.—
Es gibt ein Schwert	A sword I know
Das er nicht zerschwänge:	That he ne'er could sever :

Nothung's Trümmer	From Nothung's fragments
Zertrotzt' er mir nicht,	He needs would refrain.
Könnt' ich die starken	O, could I have wrought
Stücken schweissen,	The terrific sword
Die meine Kunst	That all my wisdom
Nicht zu kitten weiss !	Fails to weld !
Könnt' ich's dem Kühnen	Might I but forge the weapon,
schmieden,	
Meiner Schmach erlangt' ich	A reward for my woe I should
da Lohn !	find !
(Er sinkt tiefer zurück, und neigt	(He sinks farther back, and bends his
sinnend das Haupt.)	head in thought.)
Fafner, der wilde Wurm,	Fafnir, the dragon wild,
Lagert im finstern Wald ;	Lies in the darksome wood ;
Mit des furchtbaren Leibes	With his body's unwieldy
Wucht	weight
Der Nibelungen Hort	The Nibelungs' hoard
Hütet er dort.	Hides he beneath.
Siegfried's kindischer Kraft	By Siegfried's dauntless force
Erläge wohl Fafner's Leib ;	Fafnir to death might be
	doomed ;
Des Nibelungen Ring	The Nibelung's ring
Erränge er mir.	He would ravish for me.
Ein Schwert nur taugt zu der	Naught but a sword I need ;
That :	
Nur Nothung nützt meinem	Nothung is fit for my fury,
Neid,	
Wenn Siegfried sehrend ihn	When Siegfried waves it in
schwingt :	war :
Und nicht kann ich's schweis-	But Nothung, the sword,
sen,	
Nothung, das Schwert !	I never can weld !
(Er fährt in höchstem Unmuth wieder	(He continues his hammering in
fort zu hämmern.)	greatest ill-humor.)
Zwangvolle Plage !	Tiresome task !
Müh' ohne Zweck !	Aimless toil !
Das beste Schwert,	The mightiest sword

Das je ich geschweisst,
Nie taugt es je
Zu der einzigen That!
Ich tappr' und hämm're nur
Weil der Knab' es heischt:
Er knickt und schmeisst es
entzwei;
Und schmählt doch, schmied'
ich ihm nicht.
That ever I made
Would ne'er be fit
For the fatal deed!
I batter and beat it, alone
For the sake of the boy.
He bends it and breaks it in
two,
Yet taunts me if idle I be.

Siegfried, in wild forest garb, with a silver horn held by a chain, comes impetuously in from the wood. He has bridled a huge bear with a rope, and drives the beast with boisterous joy at Mime. In his terror Mime drops the sword and seeks refuge behind the hearth, but Siegfried drives the bear after him in all directions.

To the anger and alarm of Mime, and to gratify his own pleasure, Siegfried continues the sport for a few minutes. But when Mime tells him that his sword is ready, he loosens the bear, giving it a blow on the back with the bridle, and the beast runs back into the forest. Mime comes forth from behind the hearth, still trembling, while Siegfried seats himself to recover from his laughter. Then he goes toward Mime, seizes the sword, and smites it to pieces on the anvil, while Mime, terror-struck, tries to get out of the way. Siegfried gives vent to his wrath and overwhelms Mime with reproaches. In the subsequent conversation ensuing between them, Siegfried, who purposely has been brought up by Mime in utter ignorance of his parents and of the world in general, suddenly asks the smith to tell him who were his father and mother. In this con-

nection it may be repeated that throughout this drama Siegfried appears as the impetuous but candid, trustful and generous youth, so familiar in the later German tales. None of his generous qualities can appear in his dealings with the treacherous Nibelung smith, and he treats the latter with utter contempt. But as Mime, trusting to Siegfried's supposed ignorance, attempts to evade the answer to his question about his parents by some absurd remarks, Siegfried seizes him by the throat and forces him to tell what he knows.

Mime.

Einst lag wimmernd ein Weib Da draussen im wilden Wald,	Wailing, a woman once lay Without in the wilds of the wood;
Zur Höhle half ich ihr her,	To the cave I helped her to hie
Am warmen Herd sie zu hüten.	And rest by the heat of the hearth.
Ein Kind trug sie im Schooss ; Traurig gebar sie's hier, Sie wand sich hin und her, Ich half, so gut ich konnt' : Stark war die Noth, sie starb— Doch Siegfried, der genas.	With child she was ; she gave Most wofully birth to it here. With rueful throes she writhed; I rendered help in her harm ;— Dire was the woe ; she died— But Siegfried awoke here to life.

At Siegfried's request Mime informs him that he received his name by his mother's behest. After some hesitation the Nibelung also tells him that he is the son of Sieglind, but of his father he pretends to know only that he was slain. Siegfried demands visible proofs of Mime's assertion, and after some meditation the smith shows him the two pieces of the broken sword.

Mime.

Das gab mir deine Mutter:	Lo ! what thy mother had left me!
Für Mühe, Kost und Pflege	For my pains and worry to- gether
Liess sie's als schwachen Lohn. Sieh' her, ein zerbroch'nes Schwert !	She gave me this poor reward. See !—a broken sword,
Dein Vater, sagte sie, führ't es,	Brandished, she said, by thy father,
Als im letzten Kampf er erlag.	When foiled in the last of his fights !

Siegfried orders Mime to weld immediately the pieces of the sword, and threatens him with severe punishment if the weapon should not prove to be perfect after it has left the hands of the smith. This very day, Siegfried says, he must have the sword. When Mime, greatly alarmed, asks Siegfried to tell him what he intends to do with the sword, he replies that he will go out into the world, enjoy his freedom, as nothing now fetters him, and see Mime no more. He dashes off into the wood, and Mime in greatest alarm shouts after him at the top of his voice. Not receiving any reply, he sinks in despair on the stool behind the anvil.

The Wanderer (Wotan) appears, entering from the wood by the rear door of the cave. He wears a long, dark blue cloak, and carries a spear as a staff. On his head is seen a large hat with broad round brim, which hangs far down over the place of the missing eye. He greets the smith, who at his entrance has started up in great terror. The Wanderer solicits Mime's hospitality, but he is received by the smith in an unfriendly and suspicious manner. Yet he gradually advances a few steps,

Mime's fear the while increasing, and at last sits down by the hearth. Then he says that he pledges his head, and is willing to lose it if he cannot answer the questions that Mime may ask him. Mime, although in fear and embarrassment, agrees to the bargain, and announces that he will ask three questions. After some meditation he requests the Wanderer to tell him what race lives in the depths of the earth.

Wanderer.

In der Erde Tiefe	In the bosom of the earth
Tagen die Nibelungen:	The Nibelungs abide.
Nibelheim ist ihr Land.	Nibel-Heim is their home.
Schwarzalben sind sie,	Dark-elves we call them;
Schwarz-Alberich	Dark-Alberich
Hütet' als Herrscher sie einst:	Once was the king of their clan.
Eines Zauberringes	By the mighty runes
Zwingende Kraft	Of a magic ring
Zähmt ihm das fleissige Volk.	He doomed them to delve in the depths.
Reicher Schätze	Of glittering gold
Schimmernden Hort	A gorgeous hoard
Häuften sie ihm:	They heaped for him:
Der sollte die Welt ihm ge- winnen.	The world by it meant he to win.

Mime, after long reflection, asks the second question. The Wanderer is to tell him who lives on the ridges of the earth.

Wanderer.

Auf der Erde Rücken	The back of the earth
Wuchtet der Riesen Geschlecht:	By bulky giants is burdened:
Riesenheim ist ihr Land.	Riesen-Heim is their home.
Fasolt und Fafner,	Fasolt and Fafnir,
Der Rauhen Fürsten,	The chieftains fierce,

Neideten Nibelung's Macht ; Pined for the Nibelung's power.
 Den gewaltigen Hort The wondrous hoard
 Gewannen sie sich, They won for themselves,
 Errangen mit ihm den Ring ; And ravished the ring withal ;
 Um den entbrannte It brought a broil
 Den Brüdern Streit ; Between the brothers ;
 Der Fasolt fällte, Fasolt fell :
 Als wilder Wurm In dragon's guise
 Hütet nun Fafner den Hort. Fafnir guards now the gold.

Mime, who is now absorbed in thought, asks the third and last question. He requests the Wanderer to say who live in the cloud-enshrouded heights.

Wanderer.

Auf wolkigen Höh'n On lofty mansions
 Wohnen die Götter : Live the Immortal :
 Walhall heisst ihr Saal. Valhall is hight their hall.
 Lichtalben sind sie ; Light-elves they are ;
 Licht-Alberich, Light-Alberich,
 Wotan, waltet der Schaar. Wotan is head of the host.
 Aus der Welt-Esche From Yydrasil's*
 Weihlichstem Aste Most hallowed arm
 Schuf er sich einen Schaft ; A terrific shaft he wrought ;
 Dorrt der Stamm, Though the stem may rot,
 Nie verdirbt doch der Speer ; The spear shall ne'er be ruined ;
 Mit seiner Spitze And with its point
 Sperrt Wotan die Welt. Wotan governs the world.
 Heil'ger Verträge Sacred runes
 Treue-Runen With solemn oaths
 Sind in den Schaft geschnitten : Are hewn in the holy shaft :
 Den Haft der Welt The hold of the world
 Hält in der Hand He has in his hand
 Wer den Speer führt, Who wields the spear
 Den Wotan's Faust umspannt. That Wotan holds in his span.
 Ihm neigte sich The Nibelungs' host
 Der Nib'lungen Heer ; Heeds his nod ;

* See page 35.

Der Riesen Gezücht The giant's race
Zähmte sein Rath : Is ruled by his rede,
Ewig gehorchen sie alle And all forever submit
Des Speeres starkem Herrn. To the mighty lord of the spear.

At this moment the Wanderer strikes, as if involuntarily, on the ground with his spear; faint thunder is heard, at which Mime is greatly frightened. He has awakened from his dreamy forgetfulness, and does not dare to look at the face of the Wanderer. He orders him to depart, but the Wanderer reminds him that he has staked his head to enjoy the hospitality of Mime's hearth. He avails himself now of the right, according to the terms of the wager, to ask three questions in turn. If Mime cannot answer them, his life will be forfeited. Mime, with timid resignation, pleads that he has long been absent from home and knows little of heroes and their deeds. Moreover, he is now fully aware of the fact that the dreaded Wanderer is Wotan, the god. Wotan's first question is: "What is the name of the race to which Wotan shows his displeasure, while yet it is dearest to him?" Mime can easily answer that it is the race of the Volsungs, by Wotan begot and tenderly beloved. The Wanderer's second question is: "What sword must Siegfried, the foster-child of a wise Nibelung, wield in order to bring about Fafnir's death?" Mime readily replies that it is Nothung, the sword which Wotan thrust into the trunk of the ash-tree, and which Siegmund brandished in the fray until it split on Wotan's spear. The third question appalls Mime; he is to say who will forge Nothung anew from the broken pieces. He starts up in terror and admits that he knows not who will do the wonder. The Wanderer

rises from his seat by the hearth and derides Mime on account of his folly. When he might have asked what was most momentous for him to know, his mind had wandered in idle questions to distant regions.

Wanderer.

Hör', verfallener Zwerg :	Hark, thou forfeited dwarf :
Nur wer das Fürchten	None but he
Nie erfuhr,	Who never feared,
Schiniedet Nothung neu.	Nothung forges anew.
(Mime starrt ihn gross an; er wendet sich zum Fortgange.)	(Mime stares at him with eyes wide open ; Wotan turns to go.)
Dein weises Haupt	Henceforth beware !
Wahre von heut' ;	Thy wily head
Verfallen—lass ich's dem,	Is forfeit to him
Der das Fürchten nicht gelernt.	Whose heart is free from fear.
(Er lacht und geht in den Wald.)	(He laughs and goes into the wood.)

Mime has sunk, as if crushed, on the stool behind the anvil ; he stares in a vague manner out into the wood, which is illumined by the rays of the sun. After a long silence he is seized with fear and trembling.

Mime.

Verfluchtes Licht !	Accursed flame !
Was flammt dort die Luft !	What a flash of fire !
Was flackert und lackert,	What flutters and flickers,
Was flimmert und schwirrt,	What wavers and floats,
Was schwebt dort und webt	What hovers and flits there,
Und wabert umher ?	And flares and waves ?
Da glimmt's und glitzt's	It glitters and glistens
In der Sonne Gluth :	In the glow of the sun ;
Was säuselt und summt	What whizzes and hums,
Und saus't nun gar ?	And hisses and whistles ?
Es brummt und braus't	It rustles and roars
Und prasselt hierher.	And runs and rushes.
Dort bricht's durch den Wald,	It breaks through the wood

Will auf mich zu !	And hitherward bounds !
Ein grässlicher Rachen	A ghastly jaw
Reisst sich mir auf !	Gasps and gapes !
Der Wurm will mich fangen !	The fangs of the dragon !
Fafner ! Fafner !	Fafnir ! Fafnir !
(Er schreit laut auf, und knickt hinter dem breitem Ambos zusammen.)	(He screams, and sinks down behind the broad anvil.)

At this moment Siegfried breaks forth from the thicket and calls from without for the sword. When he enters, he is astonished at not seeing Mime. The latter in a faint voice asks Siegfried from behind his hiding-place whether he had returned alone. Siegfried upbraids him for his cowardice, and grows very angry when he learns that Mime had not yet forged the sword. Mime, mindful of the fact that only he who knows no fear can weld Nothung anew and slay Fafnir, says to Siegfried :

Fühltest du nie	Hast never felt
Im finstern Wald,	In forest night,
Bei Dämmerschein	When twilight dims
Am dunklen Ort,	The dismal twigs,
Wenn fern es säuselt,	When afar it hums,
Summs't und saus't,	Hisses and whizzes,
Wildes Brummen	And wildly roaring
Näher braus't,	Nearer it rushes,
Wirres Flackern	When flaring beams
Um dich flimmert,	About thee flash,
Schwellend Schwirren	When it swells and rages
Zu Leib dir schwebt,—	And around thee sweeps—
Fühltest du dann nicht grieselnd	Hast then not felt the pang
Grausen die Glieder dir fah'n?	Of horror pierce through thy heart ?
Glühender Schauer	Shuddering flames
Schüttelt die Glieder,	Shake thy limbs,
Wirr verschwimmend	Wildly swim
Schwinden die Sinne,	Thy wandering senses,

In der Brust bebend und bang	In thy breast it quakes and quivers,
Berstet hämmernd das Herz?	And hammering bursts thy heart?—
Fühltest du das noch nicht,	If ne'er such awe thou hast felt,
Das Fürchten blieb dir dann fremd.	Naught thou knowest of fear.

From Siegfried's reply it is evident that fear is unknown to him, but he fain would learn what he calls the delight of that feeling. Mime now tells him of Fafnir, and Siegfried is eager to go at once to the dragon's den, but first he urges Mime to forge the sword. The smith in rage and despair confesses his inability to achieve the desired work, and says that he who knows no fear might perhaps accomplish it. Siegfried at once prepares for work; he has soon piled a huge mass of coal on the hearth and keeps up the fire, while he fastens the pieces of the sword in the vise and files them to dust. Mime looks on in wonder. When Siegfried has reduced the pieces and placed the filings into a melting-pot on the fire, he fans the flames with the bellows. Mime tells him the name of the broken sword.

Siegfried.

(Zu der Arbeit.)

(While he is at work.)

Nothung! Nothung!

Nothung! Nothung!

Neidliches Schwert!

Stalwart steel!

Was musstest du zerspringen?

What shock hath shivered
thee so?

Zu Spreu nun schuf ich

To chaff thy blazing

Zu Spren kann senden
Die scharfe Pracht

Blade I've changed.

Die scharfe F rächt,
Im Tigel brat' ich die Spähne !

The metal I melt o'er the
fire!

Hoho ! hoho !
 Hahei ! hahei !
 Blase, Balg,
 Blase die Gluth !—
 Wild im Walde
 Wuchs ein Baum,
 Den hab' ich im Forst gefällt. Its trunk in the forest I felled.
 Die braune Esche
 Brannt' ich zu Kohl',
 Auf dem Herd nun liegt sie On the hearth now lies in
 gehäuft ! heaps.

Hoho ! hoho !
 Hahei ! hahei !
 Blase, Balg,
 Blase die Gluth !—
 Des Baumes Kohle,
 Wie brennt sie kühn,
 Wie glüht sie hell und hehr ! It glistens, glitters, and glows.
 In springenden Funken
 Sprüht sie auf,
 Schmilzt mir des Stahles To melt the metal's spray.
 Spreu.

Hoho ! hoho !
 Hahei ! hahei !
 Blow, bellows !
 Blow up the blaze !—
 How fleetly flames
 The flashing fire !
 In flickering sparks
 It sputters and flares

Hoho ! hoho !
 Hahei ! hahei !
 Blase, Balg,
 Blase die Gluth !—
 Nothung ! Nothung !
 Neidliches Schwert !
 Schon schmilzt deines Stahles Now melts the spray of thy
 Spreu ; steel ;
 Im eignen Schweisse In thy flaming stream
 Schwimm'st du nun— Thou floatest now.
 Bald schwing' ich dich als mein I'll wave thee soon as my
 Schwert ! sword.

Mime.

(Während der Absätze von Siegfried's Lied, immer für sich, entfernt sitzend.) (Sitting apart, during the pauses of Siegfried's song.)

Er schmiedet das Schwert,	He forges the sword,
Und Fafner fällt er :	And Fafnir he falls;
Das seh' ich nun sicher voraus ;	The unsailing fate I foresee.
Hort und Ring	Hoard and ring
Erringt er im Harst :—	He will wrest from his haun.
Wie erwerb' ich mir den	How gain I the guerdon for
Gewinn ?	me?
Mit Witz und List	With wisdom and craft
Erlang' ich Beides,	I'll win them both
Und berge heil mein Haupt.	And shield from harm my head.

Mime is delighted at the thought that by the fell power of soporific drugs, with which he is well acquainted, Siegfried would die after he had slain the dragon. Then he fetches vessels and pours various kinds of spices out of them into a pot. Siegfried has now run the melted steel into a mould and plunged it into the water; the loud hiss of cooling is heard. After some time he thrusts the steel into the fire, which is now red hot. He then turns to Mime, who, from the other end of the hearth, places a pot at the edge of the fire. Siegfried taunts the smith with brewing a broth while he forges a sword; but Mime continues the preparation of the fatal draught. Siegfried has drawn out the glowing steel, and hammers it for some time on the anvil with the great smith's hammer. At last he plunges the steel into the water and laughs at the hissing; then he fastens the welded sword-blade to the hilt.

Mime.

(Im Vordergrunde.)

Er schafft sich ein scharfes
Schwert,
Fafner zu fällen,
Der Zwerge Feind :
Ich braut' ein Trug-Getränk,
Siegfried zu fällen,
Dem Fafner fiel.
Gelingen muss mir die List,

Lachen muss mir der Lohn !
Den der Bruder schuf,
Den schimmernden Reif,
In den er gezaubert
Zwingende Kraft,
Das helle Gold,
Das zum Herrscher macht—
Ich hab' ihn gewonnen,
Ich walte sein !—
Alberich selbst,
Der einst mich band,
Zu Zwergenfrohne
Zwing' ich ihn nun :
Als Nibelungenfürst
Fahr' ich danieder ;
Gehorchen soll mir
Alles Heer !—
Der verachtete Zwerg,
Was wird er geehrt !
Zu dem Hort hin drängt sich
Gott und Held :
Vor meinem Nicken
Neigt sich die Welt,
Vor meinem Zorne
Zittert sie hin !
Denn wahrlich müht sich

(In the foreground.)

A wondrous sword he welds,
To fell for me Fafnir,
The foe of the dwarfs.
A magic draught I made,
That Siegfried may die,
When Fafnir be doomed.
My cunning must carry the
day,
The gorgeous guerdon I'll gain!
The brilliant ring
That my brother wrought,
Endowed with might
Of magic dire,
The ruddy gold,
Inwrought with power,—
I've won it well,
I'll wield its reward !—
Albrich himself,
Whose slave I was,
I'll force to delve
And dig like a dwarf ;
As the Nibelungs' lord
I'll alight beneath ;
And all the host
Shall heed my behest !—
The derided dwarf
Shall revel in honor !
To the hoard the god
And hero shall hie ;
At the nod of my head
The world shall kneel,
And writhe with fear
Before my wrath !
Mime, forsooth,

Mime nicht mehr : Ihm schaffen And're Den ewigen Schatz. Mime, der kühne, Mime ist König, Fürst der Alben, Walter des Alls.	No more will toil ; His bondmen shall heap The boundless hoard. Mime, the bold one, Mime is king, Lord of the Nibelungs, And leader of all!
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Siegfried, during the pauses of Mime's song, has filed and sharpened and hammered the sword with the small hammer.

Siegfried.

Nothung ! Nothung !	Nothung ! Nothung !
Neu und verjüngt !	Anew thou art wrought .
Zum Leben weckt' ich dich wieder.	Back unto life I have brought thee.
Todt lag'st du	Dead thou lay'st
In Trümmern dort,	In doleful night,
Jetzt leuchtest du trotzig und hehr.	Now flashes defiant thy fire. -
Zeige den Schächern	Blast the fiend
Nun deinen Schein !	With thy flaming blade !
Schlage den Falschen,	Slay the rogue,
Fälle den Schelm !—	Smite the wretch !
Schau, Mime, du Schmied :	See, Mime, my smith :
So schneidet Siegfried's Schwert!	So sunders Siegfried's sword !

During the last verse Siegfried has brandished his sword, and now strikes with it on the anvil. The latter is cleaved into two pieces from top to bottom, and falls asunder with a great noise. Mime, overcome with fright, sinks to the ground. Siegfried exultingly waves the sword. The curtain falls quickly.

In the second act of " Siegfried " the scene represents a dense forest. Far in the background is the opening of a cave. The ground rises as far as the middle of the stage, where it forms a small plateau ; thence it descends backwards towards the cave so that merely the upper part of its opening is visible. To the left appears through the trees a rocky wall, full of clefts. It is dark night, and especially gloomy over the background, where at first nothing can be distinguished by the spectator.

Alberich.

(An der Felsenwand zur Seite gelagert, in düsterem Brüten.)	(Leaning against the rocky wall at the side, absorbed in gloomy thought.)
In Wald und Nacht	In wood and night
Vor Neidhöhl' halt' ich Wacht :	At the den of wrath I watch
Es lauscht mein Ohr,	With hearkening ear;
Mühvoll lugt mein Aug'.	My eyes heavily gaze.
Banger Tag,	Timorous day,
Beb'st du schon auf ?	Dawn'st thou so soon ?
Dämmerst du dort	Dimly thy light
Durch das Dunkel her ?	Illumines the dark ?
(Sturmwind erhebt sich rechts aus dem Walde.)	(A storm-wind rises on the right, out of the wood.)
Welcher Glanz glitzert dort auf ?	But yonder what glimmers and glares ?
Näher schimmert	Nearer it gleams
Ein heller Schein ;	With glittering glow ;
Es rennt wie ein leuchtendes	Like the flash of a flaming
Ross,	steed,
Bricht durch den Wald	It darts through the wood
Brausend daher.	And dashes along.
Naht schon des Wurmes Wür-	Must the dragon die to-day ?
ger ?	
Ist's schon, der Fafner fällt ?	Is it he who Fafnir shall fell ?

(Der Sturmwind legt sich wieder; der Glanz verlischt.)	(The wind subsides, the light vanishes.)
Das Licht erlischt—	The flash has fled;
Der Glanz barg sich dem Blick:	The glow is hid from my glance:
Nacht ist's wieder.—	Again it is night.
Wer naht dort schimmernd im Schatten?	Who nears with glare in the gloom?

Wanderer.

(Tritt aus dem Wald auf, und hält Alberich gegenüber an.)	(Steps forth from the wood, and stops opposite Alberich.)
Zur Neidhöhle	To the den of wrath
Fuhr ich bei Nacht:	I rode through the night;
Wen gewahr ich im Dunkel dort?	Who hideth here in the dark?

Suddenly the moonlight breaks forth, the clouds are dispelled, and the Wanderer's figure becomes visible in the light. Alberich recognizes Wotan and starts back in terror, but soon after breaks out into violent anger. In wrathful words he reviles and taunts the god for the disgrace he had suffered through him when the Nibelung hoard was seized by Wotan. Alberich tells him that he is fully aware of the bargain which the gods concluded with the giants to ransom Freyja from their power. Therefore, he says, Wotan himself can never wrest the gold from Fafnir; if he did, he would break his word and his spear would be shivered. Wotan replies that there is no treaty by which he is bound to Alberich. As to the spear, the Nibelung knows that as yet he must bend to its power.

Alberich.

Wie stolz du dräu'st In trotziger Stärke,	With menace proud Thy might thou displayest,
--	---

Und wie dir's im Busen doch bangt!—	While terror is haunting thy heart!—
Verfallen dem Tod	Forfeit to death
Durch meinen Fluch	By the doom of my curse
Ist Fafner, des Hörtes Hüter:—	Is Fafnir, who hideth the hoard:—
Wer—wird ihn beerben?	Who—shall own it hereafter?
Wird der neidliche Hort	Shall the gorgeous hoard
Dem Nibelung wieder gehören?	Belong again to the Nibe- lung?
Das sehrt dich mit ew'ger Sorge.	That thrills thee with anguish unending.
Denn fass' ich ihn wieder	For lo! if I hold it
Einst in der Faust,	Anew in my hand,
Anders als dumme Riesen	Thou know'st if like reckless giants
Üb' ich des Ringes Kraft:	I'll wield the Nibelung's ring;
Dann zitt're der Helden	Then the hallowèd king
Heiliger Hüter!	Of heroes shall cower!
Walhall's Höhen	Valhall's heights
Stürm ich mit Hella's Heer:	Storm I with Hella's host,
Der Welt walte dann ich!	And rule the world by my will!

Wotan retorts that he knows full well the Nibelung's aim, but he recks not the danger. The god exclaims that he who has won the ring shall wield it. Alberich scornfully alludes to a youth of warlike descent who may pluck the fruit for the god which the latter dares not touch. But by Wotan's remarks he is led to believe that Mime is the only one who will contend with him for the hoard. This is true, in so far as Siegfried knows as yet naught of its existence. Wotan vanishes in the wood; a storm-wind rises and quickly subsides. Alberich gazes long and wrathfully after the god; he vows that at last the hoard again must be his. The day

dawns; the Nibelung conceals himself among the clefts.

Mime and Siegfried enter, the latter carrying the sword in a belt. Mime carefully looks about, casts anxious glances towards the background, which remains in deep shadow, while the eminence in the middle is gradually more and more lighted by the sun. Mime draws Siegfried's attention to the cave; Siegfried seats himself under a large linden-tree. Mime is seated opposite to him, but, from fear of the dragon, in such a manner as to be able to keep the cave in sight. The dwarf tells Siegfried of the fierceness of Fafnir, his poisonous breath and his fearful tail; but Siegfried does not mind the danger. Mime, as he departs, expresses to himself the wish that Fafnir and Siegfried may slay each other.

When Siegfried is alone, he shows his pleasure at knowing that Mime is not his father. After a long and thoughtful silence he thinks of the mother he never has seen, and bewails her fate. The singing of birds attracts his attention; he plays a lively tune on his little silver horn. "In an orchestral piece of almost symphonic import Wagner describes the mysterious whirr and life of the forest. The whole idyllic intermezzo is replete with the sweetest charm of romanticism." All at once a noise is heard in the background. Fafnir, in the shape of a huge lizard-like serpent, has risen from his hiding-place; he breaks through the thicket and rolls himself forward out of the depth to the rising ground. He has reached it with the foremost part of his body, and utters a loud yawning sound. Siegfried turns round, looks at Fafnir in great astonishment, and

laughs. Fafnir has halted at sight of Siegfried. When the dragon exclaims: "What is here?" Siegfried, perceiving that the monster can speak, tells him that he knows naught of fear, and asks him if he cannot learn it from him. He adds that if the dragon will not teach him what fear is, he will wreak vengeance on him. Fafnir laughs, opens his jaws and shows his fangs. At Siegfried's scornful words he threatens him with his tail and roars. Siegfried seizes his sword and takes a position opposite Fafnir. The latter raises himself further forward on the rising ground. Siegfried leaps aside; Fafnir swings forward his tail to seize Siegfried, but the latter evades it by springing over the back of the dragon. As the tail at once follows Siegfried and well-nigh lays hold of him, he wounds it with his sword. Fafnir hastily withdraws his tail, roars, and raises the forepart of his body in order to hurl himself towards the side with his full weight on Siegfried. In this manner he exposes his breast; Siegfried espies the place of the heart, and thrusts his sword into it up to the hilt. Fafnir rears with pain and, after Siegfried lets go the sword and has leaped aside, falls down on the wound.

Siegfried.

Da lieg', neidischer Kerl ! Die then, thou niggardly
knave !

Nothung trägst du im Herzen. Nothung has hit thy heart.

Fafner.

(Mit schwächerer Stimme.)

(In a weaker voice.)

Wer bist du, kühner Knabe,

Who is the dauntless youth

Der das Herz mir traf?

That's done me to death?

Wer reizte des Kindes Muth

Who stirred thy childish mood

Zu der mordlichen That?	To the murderous deed?
Dein Hirn brütete nicht	Thy reckless brain did not breed
Was du vollbracht.	What thou hast wrought.

Siegfried.

Viel weiss ich noch nicht,	Much is unknown to me,
Noch nicht auch wer ich bin:	I know not the name of my sire.
Mit dir mordlich zu ringen	Thy wrath aroused my soul
Reiztest du selbst meinen	To ferocious strife with thy Muth.

Fafnir tells Siegfried that he has slain the last of the giants' race; he also informs him of Fasolt's death, of the accursed gold bestowed by the gods on the giants for the ransom of Freyja, and at last warns him against the treachery of that one who stirred him up to the fatal deed. When Siegfried, desirous to know the race of his kindred, tells his name to Fafnir, the dragon groans, and rearing, expires. He has rolled over on his side. Siegfried draws the sword out of his breast; in doing this his hand is wetted with the dragon's blood. He starts up and exclaims: "Like fire burns the blood!" Involuntarily he puts his fingers to his mouth to suck the blood from them. As he looks before him in deep thought, his attention is at once aroused by the song of the wood-birds. He listens with bated breath, and after a little while exclaims that he understands the song of the birds. The voice of a bird in the linden-tree is heard. It hails Siegfried as the possessor of the hoard, and calls his attention to the Tarnhelm and the ring. Siegfried descends into the cave, where he soon completely disappears.

Mime creeps forward, gazing timidly about him, to convince himself of Fafnir's death. At the same time, from the opposite side, Alberich appears, coming forward out of the clefts. He keenly observes Mime. As the latter, perceiving nothing of Siegfried, turns cautiously towards the cave, Alberich rushes against him and blocks the way. There is a fierce altercation between the two brothers, Alberich boasting of the fact that it was he who wrested the gold from the Rhine-daughters and wrought the magic ring, while Mime contends that he forged the Tarnhelm, and moreover claims that he brought up Siegfried, and now for his toil and worry expects to receive the coveted reward.

Alberich.

Für des Knaben Zucht	For his nursing care
Will der knick'rige	Now the niggardly,
Schäbige Knecht	Shabbiest knave,
Keck und kühn	Forward and fierce,
Gar wohl König nun sein?	Perhaps fain would be king?—
Dem räudigsten Hund	The lowest cur
Wäre der Ring	Might covet the ring
Gerath'ner als dir:	More rightly than thou,
Nimmer erring'st	Never shalt ravish
Du, Rüpel, den Herrscherreif!	Thou, wretch, the royal hoop.

Mime tries to conciliate his brother, and proposes to let him have the ring, while he will keep the Tarnhelm. Alberich derisively retorts, and assures Mime that he would not give him even the smallest portion of the hoard. Mime in rage threatens his brother with Siegfried's power. The two Nibelungs perceive Siegfried coming out from the cave with the Tarnhelm and the ring. Mime laughs maliciously, and vanishes in the

wood. Alberich disappears among the cliffs. Siegfried has walked slowly and thoughtfully forward from the cave. He contemplates his booty, and stops near a tree on the height. Great silence reigns ; Siegfried knows naught of the value of the hoard, but is determined to keep the spoils as witnesses of his fight with the dragon, and also on account of the warning of the bird. He puts the Tarnhelm in his belt, and the ring on his finger. The sounds of life in the wood increase. Siegfried's attention is again called to the bird ; he holds his breath and listens.

Stimme des Waldvogels.

(In der Linde.)

Hei ! Siegfried gehört
Nun der Helm und Ring !
O traut' er Mime
Dem Treulosen nicht !
Hörte Siegfried nur scharf
Auf des Schelmen Heuchler-
gered' :
Wie sein Herz es meint
Kann er Mime versteh'n ;
So nützt ihm des Blutes
Genuss.

Voice of the Wood-bird.

(In the linden-tree.)

Ha ! Siegfried now holds
Both helmet and ring !
O, would that in Mime
No more he might trust !
Siegfried keenly must watch
The wily words of the rogue ;

What he means at heart
He can hear from his lips
By dint of the dragon's blood.

Siegfried's gesture and mien denote that he has well understood the song of the bird. He sees Mime drawing nearer, and remains immovable in his position on the rising ground, leaning on his sword, attentive and composed in manner, until the end of the following scene. Mime approaches slowly, and thinks that Siegfried is pondering over the value of the spoils taken from Fafnir's den. The Nibelung asks Siegfried if he

now knows what fear is. Siegfried replies that fear is as yet unknown to him. When Mime refers to the slaying of the dragon, Siegfried exclaims that he is almost sorry for Fafnir's death, since greater malefactors are still unslain. Then Mime, despite his efforts to dissemble his real intentions, discloses his hatred of Siegfried. In spite of himself, so to speak, he tells the young hero that he is determined to obtain possession of the hoard, and therefore the slayer of Fafnir must die. Mime now closely approaches Siegfried and holds out to him with loathsome importunity a drinking-horn into which he had poured the baneful liquid from a vessel. Siegfried has already grasped his sword, and, as if in a fit of violent disgust, strikes Mime with a blow dead to the ground. Alberich is heard from the clefts as he bursts out into scornful laughter. Siegfried seizes Mime's body, drags it to the cave and throws it in; then he rolls the body of the dragon before the entrance of the cave so as to entirely block it up. He stretches himself again under the linden-tree, and after a long silence gives expression to his feeling of loneliness. He bewails his fate, since he has neither brother nor sister; his father had fallen in battle, and his mother he had never seen. He begs the bird to comfort him in his grief.

Stimme des Waldvogels.

Hei ! Siegfried erschlug
Nun den schlimmen Zwerg !
Jetzt wüsst' ich ihm noch
Das herrlichste Weib.
Auf hohem Felsen sie schläft,
Ein Feuer umbrennt ihren Saal :

Voice of the Wood-bird.

Ha ! Siegfried has slain
The slanderous dwarf.
O, would that the fairest
Wife he might find !
On lofty height she sleeps,
A fire embraces her hall ;

Durchschritt er die Brunst,
Erweckt er die Braut,
Brünnhilde wäre dann sein !

If he strides through the blaze
And wakens the bride,
Brunhild he wins as his wife.

Siegfried springs up from his seat with great vehemence ; the first feeling of love pervades his heart, and he asks the bird if he can break through the flame-wall and arouse Brunhild from her sleep.

Der Waldvogel.

Die Braut gewinnt,
Brünnhild' erweckt,
Ein Feiger nie :
Nur wer das Fürchten nicht
kennt.

The bride to win,
Brunhild to wake,
No coward draws nigh :
None to whom fear is known.

The Wood-bird.

Siegfried with rapturous delight asks the bird to show him the way to the rock. The bird flutters up, floats over Siegfried and flies away ; he hastens after the bird. Thus closes the second act of "Siegfried."

In the third act the scene represents a wild country at the foot of a rocky mountain, which on the left rises steeply towards the background. It is night ; a storm, with thunder and lightning, prevails. Before a gate in the rock, forming the entrance of a grave-like cavern, stands the

Wanderer.

Wache ! Wache !	Awake ! Awake
Wala, erwache !	Vala, awake !
Aus langem Schlafe	From lengthy sleep
Weck' ich dich schlummernde	The slumbering woman I
wach.	wake ;
Ich rufe dich auf :	Hark to my rede :
Herauf ! herauf !	Arise ! arise

Aus neblicher Gruft,	From the misty dark,
Aus nächt'gem Grunde herauf !	From the depth of dismal night !
Erda ! Erda !	Erda ! Woman
Ewiges Weib !	Eternal, awake !
Aus heimischer Tiefe	From thy home below
Tauche zur Höh' !	Hie thee aloft.
Dein Wecklied sing' ich,	To wake thee I sing,
Dass du erwach'st ;	My song shall arouse thee.
Aus sinnendem Schlafe	From pondering sleep
Sing' ich dich auf.	I summon thee now,
Allwissende !	Seeress omniscient,
Urweltweise !	Wisest of women !
Erda ! Erda !	Erda ! Woman
Ewiges Weib !	Eternal, awake !
Wache, du Wala ! erwache !	Waken, thou Vala ! Awaken !

A dim light has begun to dawn in the cave ; Erda arises from the depth in a bluish gleam. She appears as if covered with frost ; her hair and raiment shed a glittering light. As Wotan informs the goddess that he aroused her from her sleep to receive from her the light of her wisdom, she refers him to the Norns. Wotan replies that the Norns are the tools of fate, but cannot alter the course of events.

Erda.

Männerthaten	Deeds of men
Umdämmern mir den Muth :	Dimly dismay my mind.
Mich Wissende selbst	E'en me and my wisdom
Bezwang ein Waltender einst.	A mighty one once over-powered.
Ein Wunschmädchen	A wish-maiden
Gebar ich Wotan :	To Wotan I bore ;
Der Helden Wal	The heroes' host

Hiess er für ihn sie küren.	He bade her choose for his hall.
Kühn ist sie	Bold is she,
Und weise auch :	And wise withal;
Was weck'st du mich,	Why trouble my sleep,
Und fräg'st um Kunde	And trust not the wisdom
Nicht Erda und Wotan's Kind?	Of Erda and Wotan's child? *

At this reference to Brunhild Wotan apprises Erda of the Valkyr's disobedience to his command, and of the punishment he had to inflict upon her. Erda, absorbed in thought, and after a long silence, upbraids him for punishing the maid. Wotan reminds the goddess of her gloomy foreboding in regard to the overthrow of the gods at the time she appeared before them and Wotan refused to give the Nibelung's ring to the giants in ransom for Freyja.† He now wishes to learn from her lips how the danger may be averted. Erda does not answer his question, but bids him to free her from his magic power so that she may descend to her abode. Thereupon he tells her that her wisdom is gone, and her knowledge is naught compared with Wotan's will. No more he grieves for the approaching doom of the gods, since by his will the decree of fate shall be accomplished. As formerly in disgust and despair he had doomed the world to the Nibelung's hate, he now bestows its kingdom on the noble Volsung, Siegmund and Sieglind's son, who had gained the ring. Siegfried shall awaken Brunhild from her sleep, and thus the daughter of Wotan and Erda shall ransom the world from Alberich's curse. After these words Erda descends to her home in the bosom of the earth. The cavern has become dark again; Wotan leans

* See page 131.

† See page 109.

against a rock and awaits Siegfried. Feeble moonlight dimly lights up the scene. The storm has entirely ceased. Siegfried appears from the right in the foreground.

Siegfried.

Mein Vöglein schwebte mir My bird has floated aloft;—
fort;—

Mit flatterndem Flug	With fluttering flight
Und süßem Sang	And warbling sweet
Wies es mir wonnig den Weg;	He swiftly showed me the way;
Nun schwand es fern mir davon.	But now afar he has fled.
Am besten find' ich	The rock without fail
Selbst nun den Berg;	I'll find by myself.
Wohin mein Führer mich wies,	On the way which I learned as he flew
Dahin wandr' ich jetzt fort.	Now fleetly I wander along.
(Er schreitet weiter nach hinten.)	(He goes farther towards the back- ground.)

Wanderer.

(In seiner Stellung an der Höhle ver- (Remaining in his position at the
bleibend.) cave.)

Wohin, Knabe,
Heisst dich dein Weg?

Whither, my lad,
Wends thy way?

Siegfried.

(Da redet's ja: Wohl räth das mir den Weg.)	(A voice I hear: Perhaps it will help in my search.)
Einen Felsen such' ich, Von Feuer ist der umwabert: Dort schläft ein Weib, Das ich wecken will.	A rock I must find, In raging fire inwrapped; There sleeps a woman I wish to wake.

Wanderer.

Wer sagt' es dir Den Fels zu suchen, Wer nach der Frau dich zu sehnен?	Who bade thee find The fiery rock With fervent love of the maid?
---	--

Siegfried.

Mich wies' es ein singend
Waldvög'lein:
Das gab mir gute Kunde.
From a warbling bird
In the wood I learned
Delightful lore of the woman.

Wanderer.

Ein Vög'lein schwätzt wohl manches ;	The voice of a bird may chat- ter ;
Kein Mensch doch kann's ver- steh'n :	His chirp, though, of meaning is void :
Wie mochtest du Sinn	What led thee to see
Dem Sange entnehmen ?	Sense in the song ?

Siegfried.

Das wirkte das Blut Eines wilden Wurms, Der mir vor Neidhöhl' er- blasste :	The blood of a dread, Blustering dragon I doomed to death at its den.
Kaum netzt' es zündend Die Zunge mir,	My tongue it barely Had burned, when I grasped
Da verstand' ich der Vöglein Gestimm'.	The sense of the sound of the birds.

Wanderer.

Erschlug'st du den Riesen,
Wer reizte dich,
Den starken Wurm zu be-
steh'n?
Who roused thy mind
To murderous wrath,
To ferocious fight with the
foe?

Siegfried.

Mich führte Mime, Ein falscher Zwerp; Das Fürchten wollt' er mich lehren: Zum Schwertschlag aber, Der ihn erschlug, Reizte der Wurm mich selbst; Seinen Rachen riss er mir auf.	Mime, the feigning, Faithless dwarf; To teach me fear he presumed. But to deal the death-blow, That doomed him to die, Fafnir had stirred my mind, When he stared and gaped upon me.
--	---

Wanderer.

Wer schuf das Schwert	Who forged the sword,
So scharf und hart,	So strong and fierce,
Dass der stärkste Feind ihm fiel?	To fight with so fell a foe?

Siegfried.

Das schweis' ich mir selbst,	I wrought it myself,
Da's der Schmied nicht konnte:	As the smith could not weld it;
Schwertlos noch wär' ich wohl sonst.	Or swordless I still should be seen.

Wanderer.

Doch wer schuf	But who had made
Die starken Stücken,	The mighty splinters
Daraus das Schwert du ge- schweisst?	From which thou weldedst the weapon?

Siegfried.

Was weiss ich davon!	I mind not who made them.
Ich weiss allein,	I merely know
Dass die Stücken nichts mir nützten,	For naught they were fit in the fight
Schuf ich das Schwert mir nicht neu.	Unless I had forged them anew.

At this ingenuous answer of Siegfried Wotan breaks out in good-humored laughter; but Siegfried takes his mirth amiss. He bluntly asks him to show him the way to the fiery rock or to be silent. While he draws nearer to Wotan, he observes that the god has only one eye.* He gives expression to his belief that he had lost the other in an affray when he barred some wanderer on his road. Wotan is grieved at Siegfried's harsh words, and insinuates that he loves him and his race; but Siegfried in his anger heeds not the words of the

* See page 2.

god. In the mean time the scene has become dark again. Wotan's ire is at last aroused by Siegfried's obstinacy, and especially when the hero expresses his determination to follow the bird that had shown him the way to the rock, but had fled as he came near the cave.

Wanderer.

Es floh dir zu seinem Heil ;	To save his life he has fled ;
Den Herrn der Raben	The lord of the ravens
Errieth es hier :	He believed was nigh :
Weh' ihm, holen sie's ein !	Woe unto him, if they near him !
Den Weg, den es zeigte,	The way that he showed thee
Sollst du nicht zieh'n !	Thou shalt not walk !

Siegfried.

Hoho ! du Verbieter !	Haha ! He forbids it !
Wer bist du denn,	But who may be
Dass du mir wehren willst ?	The bold one that bars my way ?

Wanderer.

Fürchte des Felsens Hüter !	Fear the mountain's defender !
Verschlossen hält	Fast in sleep
Meine Macht die schlafende	My might enfolded the maid.
Maid ;	
Wer sie erweckte,	He who awakes her
Wer sie gewänne,	And wins her away,
Machtlos macht' er mich	Mightless he makes me for
ewig !—	e'er.
Ein Feuermeer	A sea of flames
Umlfluthet die Frau,	Around her floats,
Glühende Lohe	With glowing rage
Umleckt den Fels :	It licks the rock ;
Wer die Braut begehrt,	Who wooes the bride
Dem brennt entgegen die	Must brave the withering
Brunst.	blaze.

(Er winkt mit dem Speer.)

(He points with his spear.)

Blick' nach der Höh' ! Look on the height !
 Erlug'st du das Licht ?— Behold the light,
 Es wächst der Schein, The searing flames,
 Es schwält die Gluth ; The soaring flare !
 Sengende Wolken, Fiery blast
 Wabernde Lohe, And wavering blaze
 Wälzen sich brennend Leap and roll
 Und prasselnd herab. Rushing below.
 Ein Lichtmeer Sheaths of fire
 Umleuchtet dein Haupt ; Will enshroud thy face ;
 Bald frisst und zehrt dich Direful flames
 Zündendes Feuer : Will doom thee to death :
 Zurück denn, rasendes Kind ! Back, thou reckless boy !

Siegfried.

Zurück, du Prahler, mit dir ! Back, thou boaster, thyself !
 Dort, wo die Brünste brennen, The fiery sea I defy,
 Zu Brünnhilde muss ich jetzt Forth to Brunhild I fare !
 hin !

(Er schreitet darauf zu.)

(He strides towards the rock.)

Wanderer.

(Den Speer vorhaltend.)

(Stretching out his spear.)

Fürchtest das Feuer du nicht, Know'st thou no fear of the
 fire,
 So sperre mein Speer dir den My spear shall harass thy
 weg ! haste !
 Noch hält meine Hand My palm yet wields
 Der Herrschaft Haft ; The powerful weapon ;
 Das Schwert das du schwing'st, Once this shaft
 Zerschlug einst dieser Schaft : Shivered the sword that thou
 wield'st ;
 Noch einmal denn Asunder again
 Zerspring' es am ewigen Speer ! It shall split on the godlike
 spear !

Siegfried.

(Das Schwert ziehend.)

Meines Vaters Feind !
 Find' ich dich hier ?
 Herrlich zur Rache
 Gerieth mir das !
 Schwing' deinen Speer :
 In Stücken spalt' ihn mein
 Schwert !

My father's foe !
 Here have I found thee ?
 Wrathful vengeance
 I'll wreak anon !
 Brandish thy spear :
 My sword shall break it
 asunder !

(Drawing his sword.)

Siegfried fights with the Wanderer and breaks his spear in pieces. A terrible thunder-clap follows.

Wanderer.

Zieh' hin ! Ich kann dich nicht
 halten !

Hence ! No more can I hold
 thee !

(Er verschwindet.)

(He disappears.)

“On this spear the laws of the universe are cut, and its destruction is symbolical of that of the old order of things. Henceforth Wotan resigns the world to the unimpaired impulse of youth, and returns to Valhall to await his final doom. The broken rhythm of the bond-motive from the ‘Rheingold’ denotes that Wotan’s power and the law on which it was founded are gone forever.” With increasing brightness fiery clouds have descended from the height of the background. The whole stage is filled as with a floating sea of flames.

Siegfried.

Ha, wonnige Gluth !	Ha, glorious glow !
Leuchtender Glanz !	Glittering glare !
Strahlend offen	A flaming road
Steht mir die Strasse.—	Flashes before me !—
Im Feuer mich baden !	To bathe me in fire !
Im Feuer zu finden die Braut !	In fire to find the bride !

Hoho! hoho!
Hahei! hahei!
Lustig! lustig!

Hoho! hoho!
Hahei! hahei!
How merry! how merry!

Jetzt lock' ich ein liebes Gesell! With a loving mate I shall
meet!

He puts his horn to his lips and, playing his alluring tune, rushes into the fire. The flames rage now also over the whole foreground. Siegfried's horn is heard, at first near by, then farther off. The fiery clouds pass constantly from back to front, so that Siegfried, whose horn is heard again nearer, appears to move towards the background up the height. At last the flames begin to become paler. They dissolve, as it were, into a fine, transparent veil. The latter gradually clears off and an intensely bright blue sky in broadest daylight is seen. The scene, from which the clouds have entirely disappeared, represents the summit of a rocky mountain as in the third act of the "Walküre." On the left, the entrance to a natural rocky hall; on the right, broad fir-trees; the background is entirely open. In the foreground, under the shadow of a large fir-tree, lies Brunhild in deep sleep. She is completely encased in glittering armor; her helmet is on her head, and her long shield covers her. Siegfried, in the background, has just arrived on the rocky border of the height, and gazes about in astonishment.

Siegfried.

Selige Oede
Auf sonniger Höh'
(In den Tann hineinsehend.)
Was ruht dort schlummernd
Im schattigen Tann?

Wilderness hallowed
On sunniest height!
(Looking into the wood.)
What sleeps there fast
By the shadowy fir?

Ein Ross ist's,
Rastend in tiefem Schlaf !

A horse I behold
Resting in slumber here !

Siegfried appears on the highest point of the summit and walks slowly forward ; when, still at some distance, he perceives Brunhild, he stops, lost in astonishment.

Siegfried.

Was strahlt mir dort entgegen ? What gleams and glistens beyond ?

Welch' glänzendes Stahlge- What a glittering glare of schmeide ! steel !

Blendet mir noch Is my look still dimmed
Die Lohe den Blick ?— By the dazzling light ?

(Er tritt näher hinzu.) (He steps nearer.)

Helle Waffen !— Shining weapons !—

Heb' ich sie auf ? Away with the shield !

He takes off the shield and perceives Brunhild's face, which, however, is still covered to a great extent by the helmet.

Siegfried.

Ha ! in Waffen ein Mann : Ha ! a mail-clad man !

Wie mahnt mich wonnig sein With delight my mind is Bild !— elate !—

Das hehre Haupt The helmet burdens

Drückt wohl der Helm ? The hallowed brow.

Leichter würd' ihm, If loosened, more softly

Löst' ich den Schmuck. The head would lie.

Siegfried cautiously unfastens the helmet and raises it from the head of the sleeper ; long, flowing hair breaks forth. Siegfried starts.

Ach !—wie schön !— Alas !—how fair !—

(Er bleibt in den Anblick versunken.) (He remains lost in the sight.)

Schimmernde Wolken Glittering clouds

Säumen in Wellen	Enclose with their gleam
Den hellen Himmelssee :	A lake of heavenly light !
Leuchtender Sonne	A radiant sun's
Lachendes Bild	Rapturous image
Strahlt durch das Wogenge-wölk !	Darts its rays on the dark !
(Er lauscht dem Athem.)	(He listens to her breathing.)
Von schwellem Athem	With heaving breath
Schwingt sich die Brust :--	Beats the heart ;—
Brech' ich die engende Brünne?	Shall I rend the rings of the mail ?
(Er versucht es mit grosser Behutsam-keit—aber vergebens.)	(He tries with great care to unfasten the armor, but in vain.)
Komm', mein Schwert, Schneide das Eisen !	Out, my sword, Sunder the iron.

With tender care he cuts through the rings of the hauberk on both sides of the whole armor. He then lifts off the coat of mail and greaves, so that Brunhild lies before him in a soft womanly raiment. He starts up in surprise and wonder.

Das ist kein Mann !	No man it is !
Brennender Zauber	Hallowed rapture
Zückt mir in's Herz ;	Thrills through my heart ;
Feurige Angst	Fiery anguish
Fasst meine Augen :	Enfolds my eyes.
Mir schwankt und schwindelt	My senses wander
Der Sinn !	And waver.
Wen ruf' ich zum Heil,	Whom shall I summon
Dass er mir helfe ?—	Hither to help me ?
Mutter ! Mutter !	Mother ! Mother !
Gedenke mein' !	Be mindful of me !

He drops his forehead on Brunhild's bosom. A long silence ensues. Then he starts up and sighs.

Wie weck' ich die Maid,
Dass sie die Augen mir
öff'ne?—
Das Auge mir öff'nen?
Blende mich auch noch der
Blick?
Wagt' es mein Trotz?
Erträg' ich das Licht?—
Mir schwebt und schwankt
Und schwirrt es umher.
Sehrendes Sengen
Zehrt meine Sinne:
Am zgenden Herzen
Zittert die Hand!—
Wie ist mir Feigem?
Ist es das Fürchten?—
O Mutter! Mutter!
Dein muthiges Kind!
Im Schlafe liegt eine Frau:
Die hat ihn das Fürchten
gelehrt!

* * * * *

Wie end' ich die Furcht?
Wie fass' ich Muth?—
Dass ich selbst erwache,
Muss die Maid ich er-
wecken!

Süss erbebt mir
Ihr blühender Mund:
Wie mild erzitternd
Mich Zagen er reizt!
Ach, dieses Athems
Wonnig warmes Gedüft'!—

Erwache! erwache!
Heiliges Weib!—
Sie hört mich nicht.—

How wake I the maid
That her eyes be opened for
me?—
Her eyes be opened?
Though her glance may singe
my sight?
Dare I the deed?
Endure I the light?
What flickers and floats
And flutters around me?
My senses glow
With searing flames;
O my throbbing heart!
There thrills through my veins
A feeling strange.
Could it be fear?
O Mother! Mother!
Thy manly son!
A maiden is fast asleep
And fills his mind with
dismay!

* * * * *

How conquer the fear?
How find I my courage?—
To waken myself,
The maid I first must awake.

Sweetly allure me
Her blooming lips;
Faintly quivering
They quell my fear!
With sweetest fragrance
Her swelling breath is
fraught!—
Awaken! Holy
Woman, awake!—
She hears not my words.

So saug' ich mir Leben
Aus süssesten Lippen—
Sollt' ich auch sterbend ver-
geh'n !

Then life will I sip
From sweetest lips,
Though death be my lot for
the deed.

He imprints an ardent and lingering kiss on her lips.
He then starts up appalled. Brunhild has opened her eyes. He gazes on her in astonishment. Both remain for some time lost in contemplation of each other.

Brunhild.

(Langsam und feierlich sich zum Sitze aufrichtend.) (Slowly and solemnly rising to a sitting posture.)

Heil dir, Sonne !	Hail to thee, sun !
Heil dir, Licht !	Hail to thee, light !
Heil dir, leuchtender Tag !	Hail to thee, luminous day !
Lang' war mein Schlaf ;	Deep was my sleep ;
Ich bin erwacht :	Dark was the night ;
Wer ist der Held,	Who is the hero
Der mich erweckt ?	That woke me here ?

Siegfried.

(Von ihrem Blick und ihrer Stimme feierlich ergriffen.) (Solemnly impressed by her look and voice.)

Durch das Feuer drang ich,	I broke through the fire
Das den Fels umbrann ;	That embraced the height ;
Ich erbrach dir den festen	Thy brazen helmet I loosed.
Helm.	
Siegfried heiss' ich,	Who woke thee here
Der dich erweckt.	Siegfried is hight.

Brunhild.

(Hoch aufgerichtet sitzend.) (Sitting up fully erect.)

Heil euch, Götter !	Gods, I hail you !
Heil dir, Welt !	I hail thee, world !
Heil dir, prangende Erde !	I greet thee, glorious earth !
Zu End' ist nun mein Schlaf ;	Ended at last is my slumber,
Erwacht seh' ich :	Awakening I see

Siegfried ist es,
Der mich erweckt!

Siegfried, the brave,
Who broke my sleep !

Brunhild still further gives vent to her joyful feelings ; she remembers how she had sheltered Sieglinde from Wotan's wrath.* To Siegfried she discloses the events immediately following Siegmund's death ; she asserts that her shield had protected Siegfried even before he saw the light of the world. She also says that Wotan's secret intentions had always been known to her, and that her deeds and her sufferings came from her love of Siegfried. The hero barely understands her allusions to the past ; he is aware of one thing only : the sensation he has never felt before now thrills his heart. As he is about to draw closer to Brunhild, she gently wards him off and her glance turns towards the wood. She perceives Grani, her noble horse, that had been aroused from the magic sleep at the same time as herself.

Brunhild.

(Ihn mit der Hand bedeutend.)

Dort seh' ich den Schild,
Der Helden schirmte;
Dort seh' ich den Helm,
Der das Haupt mir barg:
Er schirmt, er birgt mich nicht
mehr.

(Pointing with her hand.)

I behold my shield
That sheltered heroes ;
My helmet is here
That covered my head ;
Alas ! it hides me no longer !

Siegfried.

Eine selige Maid
Versehrte mein Herz ;
Wunden dem Haupte
Schlug mir ein Weib :—
Ich kam ohne Schild und
Helm !

A hallowed maid

Seared my heart ;

A woman sorely

Wounded my head ;—

No buckler nor helmet I bore !

* See page 141.

Brunhild.

(Mit gesteigerter Wehmuth.)

Ich sehe der Brünne
Prangenden Stahl :
Ein scharfes Schwert
Schnitt sie entzwei ;
Von dem maidlichen Leibe
Löst' es die Wehr :
Ich bin ohne Schutz und
Schirm,
Ohne Trutz ein trauriges Weib ! A woful woman, alas !

(With increased sadness.)

My hauberk's flashing
Steel I behold ;
A keen-edged sword
Cut it asunder ;
No coat of mail
Now covers the maid .
Defenceless I am and forlorn !

Siegfried.

Durch brennendes Feuer
Fuhr ich zu dir ;
Nicht Brünne noch Panzer
Barg meinen Leib :
Mir in die Brust
Brach nun die Lohe.
Es braust mein Blut
In blühender Brunst ;
Ein zehrendes Feuer
Ist mir entzündet :
Die Gluth die Brünnhild's
Felsen umbrann,
Die brennt mir nun im
Gebein !—
Du Weib, jetzt lösche den
Brand !
Schweige die schäumende
Gluth !

Through the fiery stream
Fearless I strode ;
No corselet nor hauberk
Covered my heart ;
But now in my bosom
The blaze is burning ;
Devouring flames
Flash through my veins ;
Fiercely rages
And roars the fire ;
The heat that embraced
Brunnild's height
Burns now here in my heart !—

Thou, woman, quench the fire !

Silence the foaming surge !

Siegfried passionately embraces her; she leaps up, wards him off with the strength of greatest terror, and hastens to the other side. No god nor hero, she exclaims, has ever dared to embrace her. As a holy maiden she went forth from Valhall's heights. In spite

of all she cannot easily forget that once she was a Valky whole, while now she is a mortal woman. At last, however, her love of Siegfried triumphs over all other emotions, and, unmindful of her past, she sacrifices everything for the sake of the dauntless hero.

Brunhild.

Fahr' hin, Walhall's
Leuchtende Welt !
Zerfall' in Staub
Deine stolze Burg !
Leb' wohl, prangende
Götter-Pracht !
Ende in Wonne,
Du ewig Geschlecht !
Zerreisst, ihr Nornen,
Das Runenseil !
Götter-Dämm'rung,
Dunk'le herauf !
Nacht der Vernichtung,
Neb'le herein !—
Mir strahlt zur Stunde
Siegfried's Stern ;
Er ist mir ewig,
Er ist mir immer,
Erb und Eigen,
Ein' und all' :
Leuchtende Liebe,
Lachender Tod !

Away, Valhall's
Glorious world !
To dust thy haughty
Walls be dashed !
Farewell, thou gorgeous
Realm of the gods !
End in delight,
Thou lofty race !
Rend, ye Norns,
The rope of runes :
Dusk of the gods,
Break forth from thy depth !
Night of destruction,
Draw near in thy storm !—
Siegfried's star
Beams on my sight ;
Mine he is
And always shall be,
My own and all
For ever and aye ;
Dazzling love
And laughing death !

Siegfried.

(Mit Brünnhilde zugleich.)

Lachend erwach'st
Du wonnige mir ;
Brünnhilde lebt !
Brünnhilde lacht !
Heil der Sonne,

(Together with Brunhild.)

Laughingly wakes
The lovely woman ;
Brunhild lives !
Brunhild laughs !
Hail to the sun

Die uns bescheint!	That shines on us here!
Heil dem Tage,	Hail to the day
Der uns umleuchtet!	With its dazzling glow!
Heil dem Licht,	Hail to the glare
Das der Nacht enttaucht!	That conquered the gloom!
Heil der Welt,	Hail to the world
Der Brünnhild' erwacht!	Where Brunhild awakes!
Sie wacht! sie lebt!	She wakes! she lives!
Sie lacht mir entgegen!	The laughing delight!
Prangend strahlt	Brunhild's star
Mir Brünnhilde's Stern!	Brightly beams!
Sie ist mir ewig,	Mine she is
Sie ist mir immer,	And always shall be,
Erb' und Eigen,	My own and all
Ein' und all':	For ever and aye;
Leuchtende Liebe,	Dazzling love!
Lachender Tod!	Laughing death !

Brunhild rushes into Siegfried's arms. This is the close of the third and last act of "Siegfried." "The impassible shield-maiden has become a loving woman. The duet between the lovers all but equals, in grandeur and beauty, that between Siegmund and Sieglind in the 'Walküre.'"

CHAPTER VII.

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG.

THE "Götterdämmerung," or dusk of the gods,* consists of a prelude and three acts. The *dramatis personæ* are Siegfried, Gunther, Hagen, Alberich, Brunhild, Gudrun,† Valtraute, one of the Valkyrs; the Norns, the Rhine-daughters, warriors and women at Gunther's court. The prelude opens on the rock of the Valkyrs, the scene being the same as at the conclusion of the preceding drama. It is night. Out of the depth of the background appears the glow of fire. The three Norns ‡—tall female figures in flowing dark garments—are discovered: the first, the eldest, lying in the foreground under the large fir-tree on the right; the second, younger, stretched on a bench of stone in front of the cave in the rock; the third, the youngest, sitting on a rock at the edge of the height, in the middle of the background. For some time a gloomy silence prevails.

First Norn.

(Ohne sich zu bewegen.)

(Without moving.)

Welch' Licht leuchtet dort? What light illumines the dark?

Second Norn.

Dämmert der Tag schon auf? Dawns the day so soon?

* See page 37.

† Kriemhild in the German poems.

‡ See pages 29 and 30.

Third Norn.

Loge's Heer	Loki's host
Umlodert feurig den Fels.	In fire enfolds the height.
Noch ist's Nacht ;	Night is still near ;
Was spinnen und singen wir nicht ?	Why spin we and sing we not now ?

Second Norn.

(To First Norn.)

Wollen wir singen und spinnen,	Whereon, as we sing and spin,
Woran spann'st du das Seil ?	Fasten the fateful rope ?

First Norn.

(Erhebt sich, und knüpft während ihres Gesanges ein goldenes Seil mit dem einem Ende an einen Ast der Tanne.)	(Rises, and during her song, fastens one end of a golden rope to a branch of the fir-tree.)
---	---

So gut und schlimm es geh', Schling' ich das Seil, und singe.—	For weal or sorrow and woe I set the rope and sing.—
--	---

An der Welt Esche Wob ich einst, Da gross und stark Dem Stamm entgrünte Weihlicher Äste Wald ; Im kühlen Schatten Schäumt' ein Quell, Weisheit raunend Rann sein Gewell': Da sang ich heiligen Sinn.— Ein kühner Gott Trat zum Trunk an den Quell ; Seiner Augen eines Zahlt' er als ewigen Zoll : Von der Welt-Esche	At the ash primeval * I wove it with might, When bold and firm A forest of boughs Towered aloft from its trunk ; By their shade refreshed, A fountain foamed ; Wisdom floated Along its waves ; Then sang I a holy song.— A fearless god To the fountain drew for a draught ; The light of an eye He left for e'er as a pledge ;† From the ash primeval
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* See page 35.

† See page 2.

Brach da Wotan einen Ast	A branch the mighty one broke;
Eines Speeres Schaft	A trusty spear
Entschnitt der Starke dem	Wotan split from the tree.—
Stamm.—	
In langer Zeiten Lauf	In the run of the rolling world
Zehrte die Wunde den Wald ;	The wound weakened the root ;
Falb fielen die Blätter,	Fallow the foliage waxed,
Dürr darbte der Baum :	The tree withered and waned ;
Traurig versiegte	Sadly the source
Des Quelles Trank ;	Of the fountain sank ;
Trüben Sinnes	With sorrow drear
Ward mein Sang.	Sounded my song.
Doch web' ich heut'	At the ash primeval
An der Welt-Esche nicht mehr,	No more the web I shall weave ;
Muss mir die Tanne	The fir must be fit
Taugen zu fesseln das Seil :	To fasten the fatal rope ;
Singe, Schwester,—	Sing, O sister—
Dir schwing' ich's zu—	I sling it to thee—
Weisst du wie das ward ?	Heard'st thou how it befell ?

Second Norn.

(Während sie das zugeworfene Seil um einen hervorspringenden Felsstein am Eingange des Gemaches windet.)	(Winding the rope thrown to her around a projecting rock at the entrance of the cave.)
Treu berath'ner	Sacred runes
Verträge Runen	With solemn oath
Schnitt Wotan	Wotan hewed
In des Speeres Schaft :	In the holy spear.
Den hielt er als Haft der Welt.	The world he held with its haft.
Ein kühner Held	A warrior bold
Zerrieb im Kampfe den Speer ;	In battle sundered the weapon ;
In Trümmern sprang	To splinters was rent
Der Verträge heiliger Haft.—	The spear and its hallowed runes.—

Da hiess Wotan	At Wotan's behest
Walhall's Helden	Valhall's heroes
Der Welt-Esche	Asunder hewed
Welkes Geäst	Ygdrasil's *
Mit dem Stamm in Stücke zu fallen ;	Tottering arms and trunk ;
Die Esche sank ;	The ash-tree fell ;
Ewig versiegte der Quell !—	The fountain wasted away !—
Fess'le ich heut'	To-day I tie
An dem scharfen Fels das Seil :	To the trenchant rock the rope ;
Singe, Schwester—	Sing, O sister—
Dir schwing' ich's zu—	I sling it to thee—
Weisst du wie das wird ?	Heard'st thou how it will be ?

Third Norn.

(Das Seil empfangend, und dessen Ende hinter sich werfend.) (Taking the rope and throwing its end behind her.)

Es ragt die Burg,	A bulwark bold
Von Riesen gebaut :	The giants built;
Mit der Götter und Helden	With the gods and heroes'
Heiliger Sippe	Hallowed host
Sitzt dort Wotan im Saal.	Wotan sits in the hall.
Gehau'ner Scheite	Layers of wood
Hohe Schicht	Tower aloft,
Ragt zu Hauf'	Heaped on high
Rings um die Halle :	Around the hall ;
Die Welt-Esche war diess sonst !	The ash-tree once it was !
Brennt das Holz	When holy flames
Heilig, brünstig und hell,	Wildly flash through the wood,
Sengt die Gluth	When glowing heat
Sehrend den glänzenden Saal :	Enwraps the glittering hall,
Der ewigen Götter Ende	The doom of the gods grows dark,
Dämmert ewig da auf.—	The night eternal is near.—

* See page 35.

The third Norn has thrown the rope to the second, who has thrown it again to the first. The first Norn unfastens the rope from the bough and ties it to another branch. She is uncertain whether the light comes from the dawning day or from Loki's flickering flames. Her sight grows dim ; she inquires after the doom of the god of fire. The second Norn again winds the rope thrown to her around the rock, and sings of Loki who is fated to surround Brunhild's rock with his flames. The third Norn has caught the rope and throws it behind her. She sings of the approaching end of the gods, when Wotan shall plunge the splinters of his spear into Loki's fiery breast. Then the chief of the gods shall hurl the flaming brand into the layers of wood that are piled up round Valhall's lofty walls. The third Norn throws the rope to the second, who throws it again to the first. The first Norn fastens the rope anew. The day is dawning, and with it her wisdom vanishes. The threads of the rope become entangled. A horrid vision haunts her sight : it is the gold wrenched by Alberich from the Rhine. The second Norn with great haste and difficulty winds the rope around the rock. The keen-edged rock has chafed the rope. The web becomes ravelled : it is Alberich's curse of the Nibelung ring that gnaws the texture of the rope. The third Norn hastily seizes it as it is thrown towards her ; it is not long enough ; she pulls at it with all her strength. The rope breaks asunder in the middle. Amazed, the three Norns have started up and come together towards the centre of the stage ; they seize the pieces of the broken rope and with them bind themselves together. In concert they exclaim

that eternal wisdom has vanished; the world will hear no more tidings from the Norns. Then they descend to Erda, their mother. After they have disappeared, the daylight, which has been gradually growing brighter, now fully pours in and dims the glare of the fire in the depth. Siegfried and Brunhild appear from the rocky cave. Siegfried is clad in full armor; Brunhild leads her horse by the bridle.

Brunhild.

Zu neuen Thaten,
Theurer Hельde,
Wie liebt' ich dich—
Liess' ich dich nicht?
Ein einziger Sorgen
Macht mich säumen:
Dass dir zu wenig
Mein Werth gewann!

To deeds of daring,
Dearest hero,
To bar thy way—
How were it love?
A single sorrow
Saddens me sore:
So little it was
My worth to win!

Was Götter mich wiesen,
Gab ich dir:
Heiliger Runen
Reichen Hort;
Doch meiner Stärke
Magdlichen Stamm
Nahm mir der Held,
Dem ich nun mich neige.

My gifts from the gods
I gave unto thee;
Of hallowed runes
Rich was the hoard;
But of the might
Of a warrior-maid
Bereft me the hero
Whom husband I hail.

Des Wissens bar—
Doch des Wunsches voll;
An Liebe reich—
Doch ledig der Kraft:
Mög'st du die Arme
Nicht verachten,
Die dir nur gönnen—
Nicht geben mehr kann!

Of wisdom bare—
Though her wish is unbounded;
Rich in love—
Though bereft of her strength;
Despise not the lonely,
Longing woman
Who merely can grant—
But give no more!

Siegfried replies that although he may not have grasped all the wisdom she taught him, one thing he will never forget: his love of Brunhild. She reminds him of his deeds, of the fire surrounding her hall, and of the helmet he broke to awaken the sleeping Valkyr.

Siegfried.

Lass' ich, Liebste, dich hier	Ere I leave thee, belovèd one, here,
In der Lohe heiliger Hut, Zum Tausche deiner Runen	Defended by lofty fire, For the lore of thy runes as guerdon
Reich' ich dir diesen Ring. Was der Thaten je ich schuf, Dess' Tugend schliesst er ein ; Ich erschlug einen wilden Wurm,	I give thee this ravishing ring. What glory I ever achieved Is writ in its glittering charm ; A gory dragon I slew
Der grimmig lang' ihn bewacht. Nun wahre du seine Kraft Als Weihe-Gruss meiner Treu !	Who long had guarded its gold. To thee I entrust now its might As a mindful pledge of my truth !

Brunhild receives the Nibelung ring, Alberich's dreadful work, from Siegfried's hand. She gives him her horse Grani. In by-gone times he had soared aloft over thunder-clouds and through lightning-flashes, but now, since the Valkyr has become a mortal woman, he has lost his magic power. Yet, as Brunhild assures Siegfried, the horse will obey the hero wherever he will ride him, even be it through fire. After many affectionate words Siegfried leaves Brunhild ; he leads his horse down the rock. Brunhild in rapturous delight gazes long after him from the edge of the height. From the depth the merry sound of Siegfried's horn is heard. Curtain falls.

FIRST ACT.

The scene represents the hall of the Gibichungs on the Rhine. The background is quite open, displaying a flat shore that extends to the river; rocky heights border the space. Gunther and Gudrun are seated on a throne before which stands a table with drinking-vessels. Hagen sits near the table. In this connection it must be remembered that Gibich is the name of the father of Gunther and his sister in Wagner's drama, as well as in the mediæval German epics with the exception of the Nibelungen Lied. Gunther's sister is called Gudrun in the early northern traditions* and in Wagner's composition. In the German poems her name is Kriemhild. Gibich's children are called Gibichungs. In the northern epics and sagas* Gunther's (Gunnar's) and Gudrun's father is Giuki, and his wife is Grimhild (Kriemhild), as she is also named in Wagner's poem. Gibich and Grimhild, the father and mother of Gunther and Gudrun, are merely referred to in our drama; Gibich having been a warlike king of great renown, while his wife Grimhild was skilled in sorcery. The residence of the Gibichungs is Worms on the Rhine in most of the German traditions. As to Hagen, Wagner followed the Thidrek Saga.†

Gunther asks Hagen if he thinks that Gibich's fame is worthily upheld by his son. Hagen replies that he is fully aware of Gunther's genuine birth, and that he is only his half-brother. Yet though Gunther is king by right of birth, he admits that the gift of matchless wis-

* Not including the Thidrek Saga.

† See page 65.

dom has been bestowed on Hagen, and he therefore holds the hero in highest honor. Hagen, the powerful and crafty son of Alberich,* slyly begins to unfold his plan for the recovery of the Nibelung ring, and consequently for the destruction of Siegfried. He reminds Gunther that both he and his sister Gudrun are still unwedded. Gunther thereupon asks Hagen whom he would advise him to woo. Hagen, as is evident from subsequent remarks of his, knows of Brunhild and Siegfried's marriage, but conceals the fact in order to attain his direful purpose.

Hagen.

Ein Weib weiss ich,	Of a woman I know,
Das hehrste der Welt :—	None more renowned !—
Auf Felsen hoch ihr Sitz;	On lofty heights she lives ;
Ein Feuer umbrennt ihren Saal :	A fire defends her hall :
Nur wer durch das Feuer bricht,	Who breaks through the flaming blaze,
Darf Brünnhilde's Freier sein. Brunhild he wins as his bride.	

Hagen arouses Gunther's desire, and anger withal, by telling him that a hero stronger than Gunther can alone accomplish the deed. He speaks of Siegfried the Vol-sung, the son of Siegmund and Sieglind, and at the same time insinuates that Siegfried should become Gudrun's husband. Hagen furthermore mentions Siegfried's slaying of the dragon and his acquisition of the Nibelung hoard. Gunther's heart is rent by his eagerness to win Brunhild as his wife, and by the despairing thought that he cannot achieve his purpose. Hagen discloses his plan, and tells Gunther that he might succeed if Siegfried should love Gudrun.

* See page 65.

Gudrun.

Du Spötter, böser Hagen !	Thou mocker, thou heartless Hagen !
Wie sollt' ich Siegfried binden ?	What might is in me that may hold him ?
Ist er der herrlichste Held der Welt, Der Erde holdeste Frauen Friedeten längst ihn schon.	If he is the highest Of heroes on earth, The world's winsomest women Ere now will have won his love.

Hagen.

Gedenk' des Trankes im Schrein ;	In the shrine is sheltered a potion ;
Vertrau' mir, der ihn gewann : Den Helden, dess' du verlang'st,	On me, who made it, depend ! The hero for whom thou longest
Bindet er liebend an dich. Träte nun Siegfried ein,	It lovingly locks to thy heart. If Siegfried should hie to this hall
Genöss' er des würzigen Trankes,	And drink of the hidden draught,
Dass vor dir ein Weib er ersah, Dass je ein Weib ihm genaht — Vergessen müsst' er dess' ganz.	That ever a woman he'd seen, That ever a woman he'd woo'd, His heart would wholly forget.
Nun redet :	Now say,
Wie dünkt euch Hagen's Rath ?	How seems to you Hagen's advice ?

Gunther praises Grimhild who gave him such a wise half-brother. Gudrun expresses the wish to meet Siegfried. It is therefore evident that both Gunther and Gudrun agree to Hagen's plan. Although, as has been said above, they are unacquainted with the fact of Siegfried and Brunhild's marriage, they rely on the magic love-draught to accomplish their ends. From this point

the tragic action rapidly proceeds. Siegfried's horn is heard in the distance. Hagen goes to the shore, looks down the river, and perceives Siegfried sailing in a boat. Siegfried lands. Gunther has joined Hagen on the shore. Gudrun beholds Siegfried from her throne, and for some time her glance rests on him in joyous surprise. As the men come near the hall she withdraws in evident confusion, through a door on the left, into her apartment. As in the *Nibelungen Lied*, Siegfried at once challenges Gunther to combat, but the latter receives the hero in a most cordial manner and no combat takes place. Hagen leads Siegfried's horse Grani to the right behind the hall and quickly returns. Gunther walks forward with Siegfried into the hall and bids the hero welcome. He declares that all his possessions shall belong to Siegfried; in fact he will be his vassal. Siegfried replies that he can offer naught but his sword and himself. Hagen, standing behind them, questions Siegfried about the Nibelung hoard. The hero says that he had well-nigh forgotten the gold; he had left it in the dragon's den. As to the Tarnhelm that hangs at his belt, Siegfried does not know its magic power until Hagen explains it to him. When the Nibelung asks him in regard to the ring, he says that a noble woman possesses it. Hagen has gone to Gudrun's door, and now opens it. Gudrun steps forth; she carries a drinking horn and approaches Siegfried with it. She says to him: "Be welcome, guest, in Gibich's house! His daughter hands thee the drink." Siegfried bends in a friendly manner to her and takes the horn; he holds it thoughtfully before him and says in a low voice:

Vergäss' ich alles
 Was du gabst,
 Von einer Lehre
 Lass' ich nie :
 Den ersten Trunk
 Zu treuer Minne,
 Brünnhilde, bring' ich dir !

Were I to forget
 All thou gav'st,
 One lesson I'll never
 Unlearn in my life :
 This morning-drink
 In measureless love,
 Brunhild, I pledge to thee !

Siegfried drinks and hands the horn back to Gudrun, who, ashamed and confused, casts down her eyes before him. The effect of the magic potion is instantaneous. Siegfried declares his love for Gudrun in passionate words. When he seizes her with fiery impetuosity by the hand, she humbly lowers her head and, with a gesture signifying that she feels herself unworthy of him, with unsteady step again leaves the hall. Siegfried, attentively observed by Hagen and Gunther, stares after her as though spell-bound; then, without turning round, asks :

Hast du, Gunther, ein Weib ? Hast thou, Gunther, a wife ?

Gunther.

Nicht freit' ich noch,	I never wooed,
Und einer Frau	Nor hope I to welcome
Soll ich mich schwerlich freu'n !	A woman here in my hall !
Auf eine setzt' ich den Sinn,	On one my mind I have set ;
Die kein Rath je mir erringt.	No way to win her I know.

Siegfried.

(Lebhaft sich zu ihm wendend.)	(Quickly turning to him.)
Was wär' dir versagt,	By dint of my might
Steh' ich dir bei ?	What may'st thou not dare ?

Gunther.

Auf Felsen hoch ihr Sitz ;	On rocky heights is her home ;
Ein Feuer umbrennt den Saal —	A fire enfolds her hall —

Siegfried, astonished and as if to recall something long forgotten, repeats in a low voice, “‘On rocky heights is her home; a fire enfolds her hall’?”

Gunther.

Nur wer durch das Feuer Who breaks through the flash-
bricht— ing flames—

Siegfried.

(Hastig einfallend und schnell nach- (Hastily interrupting him and quickly
lassend.) leaving off.)

“Nur wer durch das Feuer “Who breaks through the
bricht”? flashing flames”?

Gunther.

—Darf Brünnhild’s Freier sein. —Brunhild he wooes as his
bride.

Siegfried expresses by a gesture that at the mention of Brunhild’s name all his recollection wholly vanishes. Siegfried offers to bring Brunhild to the Rhine to become Gunther’s wife. By the power of the Tarnhelm he is to assume Gunther’s semblance when he shall meet Brunhild in her rocky castle. As reward for his deed Gunther promises him the hand of Gudrun. Hagen fills a drinking-horn with fresh wine; with their swords Siegfried and Gunther prick their arms and hold them for a moment over the horn.

Siegfried and Gunther.

Blühenden Lebens	Refreshing blood
Labendes Blut	Of blooming life
Träufelt’ ich in den Trank.	I dropped deep in the drink.
Bruder-brünstig	With brotherly love
Muthig gemischt	Mingled with might
Blüht im Trank unser Blut.	Our blood blooms in the draught.

Treue trink' ich dem Freund :	Faith I drink to my friend.
Froh und frei	Frank and free
Entblühe dem Bund	Shall bloom from the bond
Blut-Brüderschaft heut' !	Blood-brotherhood now.
Bricht ein Bruder den Bund,	Breaks a brother the bond,
Trügt den Treuen der Freund :	Foils he by fraud his friend,
Was in Tropfen hold	What in drops to-day
Heute wir tranken,	Duly we drink
In Strahlen ström' es dahin,	In ruddy streams it shall flow
Fromme Sühne dem Freund !	To atone for the wrong to the friend !
So—biet' ich den Bund ;	So—I plight my truth ;
So—trink' ich dir Treu !	So—I pledge my trust !

They drink, one after the other, each half ; Hagen then, who during the oath has stood leaning aside, smashes the horn with his sword. Siegfried and Gunther take each other's hands ; soon after they leave the banks of the Rhine and embark on their journey to Brunhild's abode. Hagen, by Gunther's command, remains behind to guard the hall.

Hagen.

(Nach längerem Stillschweigen.)	(After prolonged silence.)
Hier sitz' ich zur Wacht,	Here I keep watch
Wahre den Hof,	And ward of the house,
Wehre die Halle dem Feind ;—	Defend the hall 'gainst the foe ;—
Gibich's Sohne	Gibich's son
Wehet der Wind ;	Sails with the wind ;
Auf Werben fährt er dahin.	To woo a woman he went.
Ihm führt das Steuer	A stalwart hero
Ein starker Held,	Steers the helm,
Gefahr ihm will er besteh'n .	Who dangers for him will endure ;
Die eig'ne Braut	He brings him his own
Ihm bringt er zum Rhein ;	Bride to the Rhine ;

Mir aber bringt er—den
Ring.—
Ihr freien Söhne,
Frohe Gesellen,
Segelt nur lustig dahin !
Dünkt er euch niedrig,
Ihr dient ihm doch—
Des Nibelungen Sohn'.

But to me he brings—the
ring.—
Ye happy champions,
Cheerful heroes,
A charming journey be yours !
Low though you deem him,
You serve his delight—
The Nibelung's son.

The next scene represents the rocky height as in the prelude. Brunhild sits at the entrance of the cave and contemplates in silent thought Siegfried's ring. Overwhelmed with sweet recollections she covers it with kisses, when she suddenly becomes aware of a distant noise; she listens and looks towards the side into the background. The voice of the Valkyr Valtraute, riding through the clouds, is heard from the distance, as she calls Brunhild by name. The latter starts up from her seat in extreme joy. Valtraute appears, entering hastily from the wood. Brunhild impetuously hastens towards her; in her joy she does not notice the anxiety and agitation of Valtraute. She is astonished that her sister dares to approach her, and asks if Wotan's anger has ceased. Brunhild also informs Valtraute that she knew full well the inmost desire of the god when she protected Siegmund in battle. Her punishment has made her the happiest of women, since by means of it she has become Siegfried's beloved wife. The Valkyr cannot understand Brunhild's love of a mortal man; she thinks only of Valhall and the welfare of the gods. She relates to Brunhild what we already know from the contents of the drama "Siegfried" and the songs of the Norns in the prelude. Wotan's spear had been shivered by

Siegfried. Valhall's heroes at Wotan's command had felled the ash-tree Ygdrasil, and piled the fragments around the hall of the gods. Furthermore, Wotan has summoned the gods and heroes to council. In gloomy silence he now sits on his throne, holding the broken spear in his hand. The gods and Valkyrs are struck with awe. At last Wotan, deeply sighing, closes his eye and, as if he were dreaming, says: "If Brunhild should return the ring to the daughters of the Rhine, the gods and the world would be released from the curse on the gold." Valtraute, hearing the words of the god, has secretly and in haste left Valhall and gone to Brunhild's abode. She entreats her to end the woe of the gods, and give back the fatal ring to the Rhine-maidens.

Brunhild.

Mehr als Walhall's Wonne,	More highly than Valhal's heaven,
Mehr als der Ewigen Ruhm—	More highly than the pride of its realm,
Ist mir der Ring :	I prize the ring.
Ein Blick auf sein helles Gold,	One glance at its luminous gold,
Ein Blitz aus dem hehren Glanz—	One glare from its dazzling light,
Gilt mir werther	Gladdens me more
Als aller Götter	Than all the glory
Ewig währendes Glück !	And endless bliss to the gods.
Denn selig aus ihm	In its gleam I perceive
Leuchtet mir Siegfried's Liebe :	The glow of Siegfried's love.
Siegfried's Liebe—	Siegfried loves me !
O liess' sich die Wonne dir sagen !—	Holy, unheard-of rapture
Sie—wahrt mir der Reif.	Is held for e'er by the ring.

Geh' hin zu der Götter
 Heiligem Rath;
 Von meinem Ringe
 Raun' ihnen zu :
 Die Liebe liesse ich nie,
 Mir nehmen nie sie die Liebe—
 Stürzt auch in Trümmern
 Walhall's strahlende Pracht !

Go hence to the gods'
 Hallowed host ;
 And of my ring
 Tell them aright :
 The gods I defy ; my love
 Will last as long as my life.
 Sooner in cinders
 Valhall's splendor shall vanish.

Valtraute exclaims; "Woe is to me, to thee, sister, and to Valhall's gods," then hurries away, and is heard without, as if on horse, riding at full speed away from the wood. Brunhild gazes after a luminous storm-cloud as it sails away and is soon lost in the distance. Evening has come; from the depth of the valley appears the glimmering fire, gradually increasing in intensity.

Brunhild.

Abendlich Dämmern
 Deckt den Himmel :
 Heller leuchtet
 Die hütende Lohe herauf.
 Was leckt so wüthend
 Die lodernde Welle zum Wall ?
 Zur Felsenspitze
 Wälzt sich der feurige
 Schwall.

Shadows of evening
 Enshroud the heavens ;
 In brighter flames
 The blaze flashes on high.
 Why foam so wildly
 The fiery waves o'er the wall ?
 A pillar of flames
 Flares o'er the point of the
 rock.

Siegfried's horn is heard below in the valley; Brunhild listens, and then starts up in highest rapture. She hastens towards the background. Flames rush over the rocks; out of them Siegfried leaps to a projecting cliff, whereupon the flames fall back again and are visible only from the depth of the valley. Siegfried appears in Gunther's form, wearing the Tarnhelm, the visor of which conceals his face, leaving only the eyes

free. Brunhild recoils horror-stricken, and in speechless astonishment gazes on Siegfried. The latter remains in the background, standing upon the rock; he leans on his shield and gazes at her for a long time. Then he addresses her in a changed—deeper—voice:

Siegfried.

Brunnhild'!	Ein Freier kam,	Brunhild!	A wooer appears;
Den dein Feuer nicht ge-	No fear of thy fire appalls	schreckt,	him.
Dich werb' ich nun zum Weib;	Hewooes thee here for his wife,	Du folge willig mir!	So heed now well his behest!

Brunhild trembles and asks: "Who is the man that has dared to accomplish what one hero alone was fated to do?" Siegfried remains silent for some time. Brunhild in greatest anguish exclaims: "Art thou descended from man, or comest thou from Hel's night-born host?" Siegfried at last replies: "A Gibichung I am; Gunther is named the hero whom thou shalt obey as his wife."

Brunhild.

(In Verzweiflung ausbrechend.)	(In a despairing outburst.)
Wotan! ergrimmter,	Wotan! unfeeling,
Grausamer Gott!	Fierce-hearted god!
Weh! nun erseh' ich	Woe! Thy cruel
Der Strafe Sinn:	Decree I discern.
Zu Hohn und Jammer	To dire disgrace
Jagst du mich hin!	Thy daughter is doomed.

Siegfried.

(Springt vom Stein herab und tritt näher.)	(Leaps down from the rock and approaches her.)
Die Nacht bricht an:	The night draws near;
In deinem Gemach	Now in thy room
Musst du dich mir vermählen.	Anon be married to me!

Brunhild threateningly stretches out her finger on which is Siegfried's ring. She tells him to beware of the power of the ring; he rushes upon her; they wrestle. Brunhild frees herself and flees. Siegfried pursues her. They wrestle again; he tears the ring from her finger. She shrieks and falls exhausted on the rocky seat in front of her room. Siegfried with a commanding gesture compels her to enter the room.

Trembling and with tottering steps she obeys his command. Siegfried draws his sword and speaks with his natural voice.

Siegfried.

Nun, Nothung, zeuge du,	Now then, Nothung, be witness
Dass ich in Züchten warb:	That nobly Brunhild I wooed.
Die Treue wahrend dem Bruder,	To keep my pledge to my brother,

Trenne mich von seiner Braut ! Part me now from his bride !

He follows Brunhild, and thus closes the first act of the "Götterdämmerung."

In the second act the scene represents a river-bank before the hall of the Gibichungs. At the right is the entrance to the hall; at the left is the bank of the Rhine. From the latter rises a rocky slope divided by many mountain-paths. There appears an altar-stone dedicated to Fricka; a larger one higher up is consecrated to Wotan, and another towards the side to Thor. It is night.

Hagen, with spear in hand and shield at his side, sits sleeping against the wall. The moon all at once casts a glaring light on him and his surroundings; Alberich is crouching in front of him, leaning his arms on Hagen's

knees. Alberich exclaims: "Sleepest thou, Hagen, my son? Thou sleepest and hearest not him whom rest and sleep have betrayed." Hagen, without moving, so that he appears still to sleep though his eyes are open, replies: "I hear thee, dark Alberich; what knowledge hast thou to impart to my sleep?" The Nibelung reminds his son of the great strength and power he inherited from his mother; but Hagen feels no gratitude for his father, to whose cunning she succumbed, because, despite his strength, his face is pale and wan like that of Alberich. Hagen gives expression to his intense hatred against all happy beings; he himself has never known any pleasure. Alberich incites still more his son's wrath against all joyful creatures; in this manner, he asserts, Hagen can best manifest his love of his father.

Alberich.

Bist du kräftig,
Kühn und klug:
Die wir bekämpfen
Mit nächtigem Krieg,
Schon gibt ihnen Noth unser
Neid.

Der einst den Ring mir entriss,
Wotan, der wüthende Räuber,
Vom eig'nen Geschlechte
Ward er geschlagen:
An den Wälsung verlor er
Macht und Gewalt;
Mit der Götter ganzer Sippe

In Angst ersieht er sein End'.
Nicht ihn fürcht' ich mehr:
Fallen muss er mit allen!—
Schlaf' st du, Hagen, mein Sohn?

If thou art wary,
Warlike and wise,
The foes whom we fight
In the feud nocturnal
Are doomed to dire defeat.

Wotan, the reckless robber,
Who wrested my ring from me,
In the fray by his own
Offspring was foiled.
Bereft by the Volsung
Of valor and realm,
Together with the host of the
gods

In anguish his end he beholds.
No more I fear his might;
Fall he must with his mates.—
Sleepest thou, Hagen, my son?

Hagen.

(Bleibt unverändert wie zuvor.)

Der Ewigen Macht,
Wer erbte sie?

(Remaining motionless as before.)

The realm of the gods,—
Who shall rule it hereafter?

Alberich.

Ich—und du :
Wir erben die Welt.
Trüg' ich mich nicht
In deiner Treu',
Theilst du meinen Gram und
Grimm.—

Wotan's Speer
Zerspelte der Wälsung,
Der Fafner, den Wurm,
Im Kampfe gefällt,
Und kindisch den Reif sich er-
rang :

Jede Gewalt
Hat er gewonnen ;
Walhall und Nibelheim
Neigen sich ihm ;
An dem furchtlosen Helden
Erlahmt selbst mein Fluch :
Denn nicht kennt er
Des Ringes Werth,
Zu nichts nützt er
Die neidlichste Macht ;
Lachend in liebender Brunst
Brennt er lebend dahin.

Ihn zu erwerben
Taucht uns nun einzig . . .
Hör'st du, Hagen, mein Sohn ?

Zu seinem Verderben
Dient er mir schon.

I—and thou,
The world shall be ours,
If I in thy faith
May fully confide,—
Shar'st thou my harm and my
hate.—

Wotan's spear
Was split by the Volsung,
Who in the feud
Fafnir had felled
And taken the ring like a toy.

Boundless might
Was the need of his boldness.
The gods and Nibelungs
Acknowledge his reign.
My curse cannot harass
The dauntless hero ;
Naught of the power
Of the ring he knows ;
No use he makes
Of its endless might ;
By laughter and glowing love
Are gladdened the days of his
life.

Now his destruction
We sternly must strive for—
Hearest thou, Hagen, my son ?

Hagen.

Already his ruin
He seeks by my rede.

Alberich.

Den gold'nen Ring,	The golden hoop—
Den Reif gilt's zu erringen !	The ring—we must wrest from his hand.
Ein weises Weib	A woman wise
Lebt dem Wälsung zu Lieb';	Loves him as well as her life.
Rieth' sie ihm je	If e'er by her rede
Des Rheines Töchtern,—	To the river-maidens—
Die in des Wasser's Tiefen	Who by their wiles
Einst mich bethört!—	In the waves had spurned me—
Zurück zu geben den Ring :	He rendered the gorgeous ring,
Verloren ging mir das Gold,	The gold fore'er would be gone,
Keine List erlangte es je.	No art could gain it again.

Alberich incites Hagen to wage a relentless war against Siegfried, to wrest the fatal ring from him, and thus accomplish the overthrow of Wotan and Valhall. An increasing darkness conceals Hagen and Alberich, while the day begins to dawn on the Rhine. Alberich, gradually disappearing from view, and his voice becoming more and more indistinct, exclaims: "Be true, Hagen, my son! Faithful hero, be true! Be true! true!" Hagen, who has remained during all this time in the same position, looks motionless and with vacant eyes upon the Rhine.

The sun rises and is mirrored in the waters. Siegfried suddenly comes forward from behind a bush close to the river-bank. He is in his own figure, but wears the Tarnhelm still on his head; he now takes it off and hangs it in his belt. He arouses Hagen from his sleep. Gudrun appears and welcomes Siegfried. He replies by saluting her as his wife, and relates how by the magic power of the helmet he assumed Gunther's semblance and wooed Brunhild for the king. As Gu-

drun betrays some jealousy, he exclaims, pointing to his sword : " Between east and west is north ; so near, yet so far, was Brunhild." He furthermore relates that in the morning Brunhild followed him towards the valley ; when near the shore, Gunther suddenly appeared, while Siegfried at the same time, by the helmet's marvellous might, arrived at the Rhine. Hagen looks down the river from the height in the background, and discovers a sail. It is the boat that carries Brunhild and Gunther. Gudrun calls the women to the approaching double marriage, and bids Hagen summon the vassals. Siegfried and Gudrun withdraw. Hagen, standing on the height, turns towards the side of the land and blows with all his might a great cattle-horn. He calls the vassals to Gunther's court. Again he blows his horn. Other horns answer it from different parts of the country. From the heights and out of the valleys armed men rush hastily in. When they ask Hagen why he has summoned them and what foe threatens Gunther, he replies from the height where he is standing that they have been called to receive Gunther and his wife. He tells the vassals to sacrifice strong bulls in honor of Wotan ; to slay a boar for Frô, a goat for Thor, and sheep for Fricka, so that the gods may bless the approaching marriage. The vassals in great glee ask Hagen what they shall do after that. He bids them take the drinking-horns, fill them with mead and wine, and empty them in honor of the gods. The men break out into ringing laughter, while Hagen, who has remained very serious, comes down from the height and joins them. He commands them to be faithful to their mis-

tress, and to quickly avenge her if she should suffer any harm.

Gunther and Brunhild have arrived in the boat. Some of the men leap into the river and drag the boat ashore. While Gunther escorts Brunhild to the bank, the vassals with shouts clash their weapons. Hagen stands aside in the background. The men loudly salute and welcome Gunther and his bride. Brunhild, pale and with her eyes fixed on the ground, follows Gunther, who leads her towards the hall, out of which now come Siegfried and Gudrun, accompanied by a train of women. Gunther stops with Brunhild in front of the hall.

Gunther.

Gegrüsst sei, theurer Held!	Hail to thee, hero beloved!
Gegrüsst, holde Schwester!	Hail to thee, lofty sister!
Dich seh' ich froh zur Seite	I gladly see thee beside him
Ihm, der zum Weib dich ge-	Who bravely has won thee for
wann.	bride.
Zwei selige Paare	Two blooming couples
Seh' ich hier prangen.	Exult here with bliss.
Brünnhilde und—Gunther,	Brunhild and—Gunther,
Gutrune und—Siegfried!	Gudrun and—Siegfried!

At the mentioning of Siegfried's name Brunhild is startled; she raises her eyes and perceives Siegfried. She lets go of Gunther's hand, impetuously advances a step towards Siegfried, then falls back in horror and with glaring eyes gazes upon him. All the men and women are astonished. Siegfried goes calmly a few steps nearer to Brunhild, and asks what is the cause of her sudden emotion.

Brunhild.

(Kaum ihrer mächtig.)	(Barely able to control herself.)
Siegfried—hier!—Gutrune?—	Siegfried—here!—Gudrun?

Siegfried.

Gunther's milde Schwester: Gunther's modest sister,
Mir vermählt, Married to me
Wie Gunther du. As thou to him.

Brunhild.

Ich—Gunther?—du lüg'st!— I—to Gunther?—thou liest!—
 Mir schwindet das Licht— The light grows dim—
 (Sie droht umzusinken; Siegfried, ihr
 zunächst, stützt sie.) (She is about to fall; Siegfried, being
 nearest, supports her.)

Brunhild.

(Matt und leise in Siegfried's Arme.) (Faintly and softly in Siegfried's arms.)
Siegfried—kennt mich nicht? Siegfried—knows me not?—

Siegfried.

Gunther, deinem Weib ist übel! Gunther, thy wife is ill.
 (Gunther tritt hinzu.) (Gunther approaches.)
 Erwache, Frau! Awaken, woman!
 Hier ist dein Gatte. Here is thy husband.

As Siegfried points at Gunther with his finger, Brunhild recognizes the ring upon it. She starts up in terror, with great vehemence.

Brunhild.

Ha!—der Ring—
An seiner Hand!
Er—Siegfried?
Ha!—The ring
I behold on his hand!
His?—Siegfried's?

While the men and women assembled give expression to their amazement, Hagen comes forth from the background and says to Gunther's vassals: "Now listen well to the woman's speech." Brunhild collects herself and by a strong effort represses her fearful agitation.

Brunhild.

Einen Ring sah' ich
An deiner Hand :—
Nicht dir gehört er,
Ihn entriss mir

(Auf Gunther deutend.)

—Dieser Mann !

A ring I beheld
Here on thy hand ;—
No right thou hast
To the ring ; it was wrenched
(Pointing at Gunther.)
From me—by that man.

As she asks Siegfried how he could have come into the possession of the ring, he replies that he did not receive it from Gunther. Thereupon Brunhild turns to Gunther and fiercely demands of him that, if it was he (Gunther) who had torn the ring from her finger as the pledge of marriage, he must insist on his sacred right and obtain the ring again. Gunther is greatly perplexed, and admits that he never gave the ring to Siegfried. When Brunhild asks Gunther where he conceals the ring, he is in great confusion and remains silent. All at once a thought strikes Brunhild, and she bursts out in terrible wrath :

Brunhild.

Ha !—Dieser war es,
Der mir den Ring entriss :
Siegfried, der trugvolle Dieb !

Ha !—He then it was
Who wrenched the ring from
my hand ;
Siegfried, the treacherous
wretch !

Siegfried.(Der über der Betrachtung des Ringes
in fernes Sinnen entrückt war.)

Von keinem Weib
Kam mir der Reif ;
Noch war's ein Weib,
Dem ich ihn abgewann :
Genau erkenn ich
Des Kampfes Lohn,

(Who had been carried far away by
the contemplation of the ring.)

No woman gave me
This golden ring ;
Nor woman 'twas
From whom the reward I won.
Full well I remember
The meed of the fray,

Den vor Neidhöhl' einst ich When once at the Den of
 bestand, Wrath
 Als den starken Wurm ich The raging dragon I slew.
 erschlug.

Hagen draws near to Brunhild, and says if the ring which she gave to Gunther is the same that Siegfried now wears on his finger, he must have obtained it by fraud; for such a crime the traitor shall suffer terrible punishment. Brunhild screams in fearful anguish: "Treason! treason! Most shameful deceit!"

Brunhild.

Heilige Götter!	Hallowed gods!
Himmlische Lenker!	Ye heavenly guides!
Rauntet ihr dies	Was this the doom
In eurem Rath?	Ordained for me?
Lehrt ihr mich Leiden	Unnamable sorrow
Wie keiner sie litt?	Like none ever suffered?
Schuft ihr mir Schmach	No woman has felt
Wie nie sie geschmerzt?	More fearful woe!
Rathet nun Rache	Name now such vengeance
Wie nie sie gerast!	As never was wreaked!
Zündet mir Zorn	Arouse my wrath
Wie nie er gezähmt!	To right this wrong!
Heisset Brünhild'	Let Brunhild's heart
Ihr Herz zu zerbrechen,	Be broken at once,
Den zu zertrümmern,	If but he who wronged her
Der sie betrog!	Be ruined and wrecked.

Gunther, deeply moved, beseeches Brunhild to calm herself. The vassals have listened to her words with great astonishment. Hagen conceals his inward delight at the course of events.

Brunhild.

(To Gunther.)

Weich' fern, Verräther!	Away, thou betrayed,
Selbst Verrath'ner!—	Woful betrayer!

Wisset denn Alle :
Nicht—ihm,—
Dem Manne dort
Bin ich vermählt.

Hark to me, all :
Not—he,—
That man—yonder—
Was married to me.

Mannen und Frauen.

Men and Women.

Siegfried ? Gutrun's Gemahl ? Siegfried ? Gudrun's spouse ?

Brunhild.

Er zwang mir Lust
Und Liebe ab.

He forced delight
And love from me.

Siegfried sternly reproves Brunhild for being so little mindful of her own honor. He calls the vassals to witness if ever he broke his oath of brotherhood to Gunther. The sword Nothung, he exclaims, guarded his oath ; it separated him from Gunther's bride. Brunhild replies that she knows full well the sword,* but she also knows the scabbard in which Nothung was encased and reposed on the wall when Siegfried was married to Brunhild. Gunther, Gudrun, and the vassals are greatly enraged and surprised. Siegfried, who by the magic draught that Gudrun gave him at Hagen's advice had forgotten the events relating to his marriage with Brunhild, seems angry and is ready to swear that he has always been faithful to Gunther. The vassals form a ring round Siegfried and Hagen. Hagen holds out his spear, and Siegfried lays two fingers of his right hand on its point.

Siegfried.

Helle Wehr !
Heilige Waffe !
Hilf meinem ewigen Eide !—
Bei des Speeres Spitze

Warlike spear !
Hallowed weapon !
Ward my oath and my honor !
On this glittering spear-head

* See end of First Act.

Sprech' ich den Eid : I speak the oath :
 Spitze, achte des Spruchs !— Spear - head, witness my
 speech !—
 Wo Scharfes mich schneidet,
 Schneide du mich ; Where steel can harm me,
 Wo der Tod mich soll treffen,
 Treffe du mich : Strike at my heart ;
 Klagte das Weib dort wahr,
 Brach ich dem Bruder den Eid ! If true be this woman's words,
 If my faith to my brother I
 broke.

Brunhild.

(Tritt wüthend in den Ring, reisst Siegfried's Hand vom Speere, und fasst dafür mit der ihrigen die Spitze.)

Helle Wehr !
 Heilige Waffe !
 Hilf meinem ewigen Eide !—
 Bei des Speeres Spitze
 Sprech' ich den Eid :
 Spitze, achte des Spruchs !—
 Ich weihe deine Wucht,
 Dass sie ihn werfe ;
 Deine Schärfe segn' ich,
 Dass sie ihn schneide :
 Denn, brach seine Eide er all,
 Schwur Meineid dieser Mann !

Die Männer.

(Im höchsten Aufruhr.)

Hilf, Donner !
 Tose dein Wetter,
 Zu schweigen die wüthende
 Schmach !

Siegfried advises Gunther to prevent Brunhild from using such insulting words. He draws nearer to him and says: " Believe me, I am more enraged at this

(Steps wrathfully into the circle,
 thrusts Siegfried's hand away from
 the spear, and seizes the point with
 her own.)

Warlike spear !
 Hallowed weapon !
 Ward my oath and my honor !
 On this glittering spear-head
 I speak the oath :
 Spear-head, witness my speech !
 Thy might shall doom him
 To dismal death !
 Thy blade I bless,
 So his blood shall atone
 For all the oaths the fierce,
 Perfidious man has betrayed !

The Vassals.

(In the greatest tumult.)

Help, Thor !
 Let thy thunder be heard
 To silence this grievous disgrace !

course of events than you can be ; methinks the Tarn-helm has but partly concealed my face.” Then he cheerfully turns to the vassals and women and bids them follow him to the wedding-feast. With boundless joy he throws his arms round Gudrun and draws her into the hall with him. The men and women follow. Brunhild, Gunther and Hagen remain behind. Gunther, covering his face, has seated himself aside in deep shame and utter dejection. Brunhild stands in the foreground and gazes vacantly before her. She gives vent to the terrible wrath that has taken possession of her soul. “Where,” she says, “is now all my wisdom against this enchantment, where are my runes against this riddle? All I knew I have taught him, and now he holds me in bondage and despises me. Who will offer me a sword with which I may sever these bonds?” Hagen draws near to her and promises to revenge her honor. She derides him and laughs bitterly, as she knows full well that neither Hagen nor any other hero can vanquish Siegfried in combat. Hagen admits that Siegfried’s strength is invincible, yet he asks Brunhild if she does not know of any manner in which his death might nevertheless be brought about. His question arouses Brunhild’s wrath and despair anew. By her runic wisdom she protected Siegfried against all harm in combat ; but—as she knew that he would never flee from an enemy—she did not bestow any magic blessing on his back. Hagen quickly replies: “There my spear shall pierce him!” He turns quickly from Brunhild to Gunther, who has been sitting apart during the conversation of Brunhild and Hagen.

Gunther rises sorrowfully and gives expression to his

feelings of shame and anger. Hagen bluntly tells him: "I do not deny that thy disgrace is great." Brunhild sarcastically reproaches Gunther for his cowardice. Gunther shows, as in all the Nibelung traditions, his weak character. He confesses that he is a traitor betrayed. He even goes so far as to remind Hagen that they both are the sons of the same mother, and pitifully asks the help of the Nibelung. Hagen sternly replies that there is no help except in Siegfried's death. When Gunther, horror-struck, refers to the blood-brotherhood he swore to Gudrun's husband, Hagen tells him that Siegfried broke the bond. Brunhild exclaims: "He betrayed thee, and you all betrayed me. If I demanded full satisfaction, all the blood in the world could not efface your guilt. But the death of one shall suffice. Siegfried must die to atone for his crime and yours." Hagen turns close to Gunther and calls his attention to the Nibelung ring; he tells him that the ring bestows measureless power on its possessor, and can be obtained only by Siegfried's death. Gunther still hesitates, thinking of his sister Gudrun. "How can we," he says, "stand before her after we have slain her husband?" Hagen* proposes to hide the deed from Gudrun. "We go to a merry hunt to-morrow," he says, "and we pretend that Siegfried was killed by a boar."

Gunther and Brunhild.

So soll es sein !
Siegfried falle :
Sühn' er die Schmach,
Die er mir schuf !

So shall it be !
Siegfried falleth !
For the shame he wrought
His ruin shall atone !

* See the account of Siegfried's death in the *Nibelungenlied*.

Eid-Treue
Hat er getrogen :
Mit seinem Blute
Büss' er die Schuld !

Allrauner !
Rächender Gott !
Schwurwissender
Eideshort !
Wotan ! Wotan !
Wende dich her !
Weise die schrecklich
Heilige Schaar,
Hieher zu horchen
Dem Racheschwur !

Truth and honor
And oath he betrayed ;
His blood shall efface
His fell offence.

All-ruling
God of wrath !
Thou awful ward
And witness of oaths !
Wotan ! Wotan !
Hitherward hark !
Send forth thy holy
Fearful host,
Here to aid
Our oath of revenge !

Hagen.

So soll es sein !
Siegfried falle :
Sterb' er dahin,
Der strahlende Held !
Mein ist der Hort,
Mir muss er gehören :
Entrissen d'rüm
Sei ihm der Ring !

Alben-Vater !
Gefallener Fürst !
Nacht-Hüter !
Niblungen-Herr !
Alberich ! Alberich !
Achte auf mich !
Weise von neuem
Der Nibelungen Schaar,
Dir zu gehorchen,
Des Ringes Herrn !

So shall it be !
Siegfried falleth !
To death be doomed
The dazzling hero !
Mine is the hoard,
My might shall hold it ;
So of the ring
He must be bereft.

Niblung-father,
Thou fallen prince !
Ruler of night !
Lord of the Nibelungs .
Alberich ! Alberich !
Come to my aid !
The Nibelungs' host
Anew shall heed
The behest of their ruler,
The lord of the ring.

Gunther and Brunhild turn hastily towards the hall.

At the same moment a bridal procession, headed by boys and girls waving staves covered with flowers, meets them. Siegfried on a shield, and Gudrun on a chair, surrounded by her women, are borne by the men. Siegfried and the vassals blow with their horns the wedding-call. The women invite Brunhild to accompany them at Gudrun's side. Gunther grasps Brunhild, who has been staring with suppressed wrath at Gudrun, by the hand, and follows with her. Hagen alone remains behind.

At the opening of the third act a wild woody and rocky valley of the Rhine is seen. In the background the river seems to rush past a steep slope. The three Rhine-maidens, Woglinde, Wellgunde and Flosshilde, rise out of the water and, during the following song, swim about in a circle.

Frau Sonne	The sun-orb
Sendet lichte Strahlen ;	Sends its streams of light.
Nacht liegt in der Tiefe :	Darkness lies in the deep ;
Einst war sie hell,	Once it was bright,
Da heil und hehr	When safe and brilliant
Des Vaters Gold in ihr glänzte !	Our father's gold in it glistened.
Rhein-Gold !	Rhine-gold !
Klares Gold !	Glorious gold !
Wie hell strahltest du einst,	How strong was thy light of yore,
Hehrer Stern der Tiefe !	Resplendent star of the deep !
Frau Sonne,	O send us, Sun,
Send' uns den Helden,	Soon the hero
Der das Gold uns wiedergäbe !	Who'll give us again the gold !
Liess' er es uns,	If he rendered our heirloom,
Dein liches Aug'	Thy radiant eye

Neideten dann wir nimmer.	No more we should meet with envy.
Rhein-Gold !	Rhine-gold !
Klares Gold !	Glorious gold !
Wie froh strahltest du dann	How gladly again thou wouldest glow,
Freier Stern der Tiefe !	Glittering star of the deep !

Siegfried's horn is heard from the height. The Rhine-maidens dive quickly down the waters. Siegfried appears on the slope in full armor. "Some elf," he exclaims, "led me astray, until I lost the track of the bear I had followed." The three Rhine-maidens arise again from the waters. They ask of him the reason why he is so enraged. Siegfried looks smilingly at them. "If you, fair maids," he says, "have enticed away the fellow with the shaggy hide, and he is your lover, I will gladly leave him with you." The maidens laugh aloud. They ask him what present he would make them if by their help he should recover his booty. Siegfried replies that as yet he has pursued the chase in vain ; "But tell me," he adds, "what you desire."

Wellgunde.

Ein gold'ner Ring	A golden ring
Ragt dir am Finger—	Inwraps thy finger—

The Three Rhine-daughters.

(Together.)

Den gieb' uns !	Give us the ring !
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Siegfried.

Einen Riesenwurm	A dragon gigantic
Erschlug ich um den Ring :	I slew to gather that ring.
Für des schlechten Bären	For the paws of a paltry bear
Tatzen	
Böt' ich ihn nun zum Tausch ?	Should I now barter the prize ?

The Rhine-maidens upbraid him for his apparent avarice and otherwise tease him, as he will not give them his ring. They laugh and dive below the waters. Siegfried, when alone, exclaims: "What makes me endure their slander? If they should come up again near the shore, they might have my ring." The Rhine-daughters arise again from the waters, but this time appear grave and solemn. They tell him now to keep the ring and guard it well until he has learned the tidings of the curse that rests upon it. Siegfried calmly puts the ring again on his finger and bids them sing what they know.

The Rhine-daughters.

Siegfried ! Siegfried ! Sieg-	Siegfried ! Siegfried ! Sieg-
fried !	fried !
Schlimmes wissen wir dir.	Sorrow drear we foresee.
Zu deinem Wehe	To rueful woe
Wahr'st du den Ring!	Thou wardest the ring.
Aus des Rheines Gold	From the gold of the Rhine
Ist der Reif geglüht :	It was wrathfully wrought.
Der ihn listig geschmiedet	He who craftily shaped it,
Und schmählich verlor,	And lost it in shame,
Der verfluchte ihn,	Accursed it for aye:
In fernster Zeit	Whoever shall own it
Zu zeugen den Tod	Is fated to fall;
Dem, der ihn trüg'.	Forfeit is his life.
Wie den Wurm du fälltest,	As the dragon thou slewest,
So fällst auch du,	Thyself shalt be slain,
Und heute noch	And here to-day
—So heissen wir dir's ;—	—Thy doom thou hearest—
Tauschest den Ring du uns	Unless thou render'st the
nicht,	ring
Im tiefen Rhein ihn zu bergen.	To the rolling waves of the Rhine.

Nur seine Fluth
Sühnet den Fluch!

Nought but its depth
Redeemeth the curse!

Siegfried pays no attention to their warnings; even when they say that the Norns at night had woven Alberich's curse into the rope of life * he remains indifferent. The thoughtless hero tells them that what they could not obtain from him by allurements they will still less achieve by trying to frighten him. He full well remembers the dying Fafnir's warning words, but heeds them not. Life, he says, if it must be spent in fear and without love, is not worth living. The Rhine-maidens swim away singing. The call of bugles is heard from the height. Siegfried answers merrily with his horn.

Hagen appears on the hills, and is soon followed by Gunther and the vassals. They greet Siegfried; game is piled up, and drinking-horns are brought. They all lie down. Hagen exclaims: "Now shall you hear of wonders accomplished by Siegfried's hunt." Siegfried laughingly admits that he has had no luck in the chase; water-game, he says, was all he met with: three rivermaids had told him that he would be slain to-day. Gunther starts and looks darkly at Hagen. The latter laughs, and remarks that this would indeed be a doleful hunt, if the luckless hunter were killed by lurking beasts. Siegfried has now seated himself between Hagen and Gunther; filled drinking-horns are handed to them. Siegfried drinks and then offers his horn to Gunther, who gazes thoughtfully and dismally into it. "The wine," says Gunther to Siegfried, "looks pale and

* See page 194.

weak ; thy blood alone is in it.” Siegfried laughingly pours some wine out of Gunther’s horn into his own, so that it overflows.

Hagen asks Siegfried if it be true that he understands the song of birds. Siegfried replies that since he has heard the singing of women he forgot the sounds of the birds ; but to cheer up Gunther, who is absorbed in gloomy thought, he offers to relate some adventures of his early days. The vassals place themselves near to Siegfried, who alone sits upright while they recline. The events which Siegfried now recounts are well known to the reader from the contents of the drama “Siegfried,” and there is no need of repeating all of them here. We may mention that he sings of the days of his early youth when he was in the forest with Mime. He likewise sings of the forging of the sword and the slaying of Fafnir.* He refers to the song of the bird that told him of Mime’s treachery. When he recounts Mime’s death, Hagen laughs and says: “He was felled by the sword he could not forge.” Then Hagen squeezes the juice of an herb into the drinking-horn. Siegfried drinks, and the effect of the draught of forgetfulness which Gudrun, at Hagen’s advice, had given to him is now wholly effaced.

Siegfried continues the tale of his adventures, and says a bird sang to him the following song :

“ Hei, Siegfried erschlug nun
Den schlimmen Zwerg !
Jetzt wüsst’ ich ihm noch
Das herrlichste Weib :—

“ Ha ! Siegfried has slain
The slanderous dwarf.
O, would that the fairest
Wife he might find !

* See pages 158-168.

Auf hohem Felsen sie schläft,
Ein Feuer umbrennt ihren
Saal;
Durchschritt' er die Brunst,
Erweckt' er die Braut,
Brünnhilde wäre dann sein!"

On lofty heights she sleeps,
A fire embraces her hall.
If he strides through the blaze
And wakens the bride,
Brunhild he wins as his wife."

Gunther listens with increasing astonishment. Hagen asks Siegfried if he obeyed the advice of the bird.

Siegfried.

Rasch ohne Zögern	At once I set out
Zog ich da aus,	And wandered along,
Bis den feurigen Fels ich traf;	Till the flaming rock I had reached.
Die Lohe durchschritt ich,	I went through the fire,
Und fand zum Lohn—	And found as reward—
Schlafend ein wonniges Weib	A woman bewitchingly sweet
In lichter Waffen Gewand.	Asleep in warrior-mail.
Den Helm löst' ich	The helm I unfastened
Der herrlichen Maid;	From the head of the fair one;
Mein Kuss erweckte sie	My kiss awakened the wo- man!—
O wie mich brünstig da um- schlang	In fervent embrace I felt
Der schönen Brünnhilde Arm!	Beauteous Brunhild's arm.

Gunther greatly wonders at Siegfried's words. Two ravens fly from a bush, circle over Siegfried and depart. Hagen asks Siegfried: "Divinest thou also the speech of these ravens?" Siegfried starts up impetuously and, turning his back towards Hagen, looks after the ravens. At this moment Hagen thrusts his spear into Siegfried's back; Gunther, too late, seizes his arm. Gunther and the vassals exclaim: "Hagen, what deed hast thou done?" Siegfried swings aloft his shield with both

hands to crush Hagen with it ; his strength forsakes him, the shield drops from his hand, and he himself falls with a crash over it. Hagen points to him as he lies stretched out on the ground, and with the words, "Perjury have I avenged," turns calmly away. He soon disappears beyond the heights. Gunther, stricken with grief, bends down to Siegfried's side. The vassals stand with signs of sincere sympathy around the dying hero. Long silence of deepest sorrow. At the appearance of the ravens, twilight had already commenced to fall. Siegfried once more opens his flashing eyes, and with a solemn voice says :

Brünnhilde—	Brunhild !
Heilige Braut—	Hallowed bride !—
Wach' auf ! Öff'ne dein Auge !	Awaken ! Open thine eyes !
Wer verschloss dich	Who again has doomed thee
Wieder in Schlaf ?	To dismal slumber ?
Wer band dich in Schlummer so bang ?—	Who binds thee in bonds of sleep ?—
Der Wecker kam ;	The wakener came,
Er küsst dich wach,	His kiss awoke thee ;
Und aber der Braut	Once more he broke
Bricht er die Bande :—	The bonds of his bride ;—
Da lacht ihm Brünnhilde's Lust !—	O for Brunhild's loving em- brace !
Ach, dieses Auge,	Ah !—her eyes
Ewig nun offen !—	Are open forever !
Ach, dieses Athems	Ah !—how sweet
Wonniges Wehen !—	Is her swelling breath !—
Süßes Vergehen—	Delicious destruction—
Seliges Grauen :—	Ecstatic awe—
Brünnhild' bietet mir—	Brunhild gives greeting—to
Gruss !—	me !—

Siegfried dies. The vassals raise his body on his

shield and carry it in solemn procession slowly away over the height. Gunther follows at a little distance. The orchestra plays the famous funeral march.

The moon breaks through the clouds and lights the procession along the hills. Then mists arise from the Rhine and gradually fill the whole stage up to the front. When the mist disperses, the scene is changed to the hall of the Gibichungs near the river-bank as in the first act. It is night. Moonlight is mirrored in the Rhine. Gudrun enters the hall from her room.

Gudrun.

War das sein Horn ?	Was that his horn ?
(Sie lauscht.)	(She listens.)
Nein !—noch	Hark !—not
Kehrt er nicht heim.—	Yet is he home.—
Schlimme Träume	Horrid dreams
Störten mir den Schlaf !—	Haunted my sleep.—
Wild hört' ich	His horse's wild
Wiehern sein Ross :—	Whinny I heard ;—
Lachen Brünnhilde's	Brunhild's laughter
Weckte mich auf.—	Broke my slumber.—
Wer war das Weib,	A woman I saw
Das zum Rhein ich schreiten sah ?—	Wending her way to the shore.—
Ich fürchte Brünnhild' !—	I dread Brunhild.—
Ist sie daheim ?	Is she at home ?
(Sie lauscht an einer Thüre rechts, und ruft dann leise :)	(She listens at a door on the right, and then calls softly :)
Brünnhild' ! Brünnhild' !	Brunhild ! Brunhild !
Bist du wach ?—	Art thou awake ?
(Sie öffnet schüchtern und blickt hinein.)	(She timidly opens the door and looks in.)
Leer das Gemach !—	Bare is the room.—
So war es sie,	So she it was

Die zum Rhein ich schreiten That went to the shore of the
sah?— Rhine?—

(Sie erschrickt und lauscht nach der (She becomes terrified and listens
Ferne.) towards the distance.)

Hört' ich sein Horn?— Heard I his horn?—

Nein!— No!—

Öde alles!— All alone!—

Säh' ich Siegfried nur bald! O would that he were here!

She is on the point of returning to her room; all at once she hears Hagen's voice; she stops and, overcome by fear, remains for some time motionless. Hagen's voice from without is coming nearer.

Hagen.

Hoiho! hoiho!

Wacht auf! Wacht auf!

Lichte! Lichte!

Helle Brände!

Jagdbeute

Bringen wir heim.

Hoiho! hoiho!

(Licht und wachsender Feuerschein
von aussen.)

Hoyho! hoyho!

Awake! Awake!

Torches! torches!

Bring the brands!

From the hunt we bring

Home now the booty.

Hoyho! hoyho!

(Lights and increasing flashes of fire
from without.)

Hagen.

(In die Halle tretend.)

(Entering the hall.)

Auf! Gutrun'!

Up! Gudrun!

Begrüsse Siegfried!

To Siegfried give greeting!

Der starke Held,

The hardy hero

Er kehret heim.

Is coming home.

Men and women with lights and firebrands accompany amidst great confusion the train with Siegfried's body. Gunther is among them.

Gudrun.

(In grosser Angst.)

(In great terror.)

Was geschah, Hagen?

What happened, Hagen?

Nicht hört' ich sein Horn!

I heard not his horn.

Hagen.

Der bleiche Held,

His cheeks are blanched,

Nicht bläst' er's mehr;

He blows it no more;

Nicht stürmt er zum Jagen,

To hunt or battle

Zum Streit nicht mehr,

He hies no more,

Noch wirbt er um wonnige

Nor wooes he the fairest of

Frauen!

women!

Gudrun asks with growing fear what the men have brought into the hall. Hagen replies: "Siegfried, thy husband, slain by a wild boar." Gudrun screams and throws herself on the body, which has been set down in the middle of the hall. General emotion and sorrow. Gunther bends over his fainting sister and tries to raise her. She recovers herself, thrusts him away and calls him her husband's murderer. Gunther accuses Hagen of the treacherous crime. Hagen scornfully retorts: "Art thou angry with me for the deed?" When Gunther says, "To woe and anguish thou shalt be doomed for ever," Hagen exclaims with terrible defiance: "Well, then! It is I that have slain him! I—Hagen—have dealt him the death-blow with my spear on which he spoke a truthless oath. A holy right to Siegfried's heirloom I have obtained; therefore I now claim this ring." Gunther bids him to keep away from the ring. "Shameless son of the Nibelung," he says, "how darest thou touch Gudrun's inheritance?" Hagen draws his sword and retorts: "The Nibelung's son thus demands the Nibelung's heirdom." He rushes on Gunther; the latter defends himself; they fight.

The vassals throw themselves between them. Gunther, at a stroke of Hagen's sword, falls dead to the ground.*

Hagen grasps at Siegfried's hand, which raises itself threateningly.† General amazement. Gudrun and the women scream. From the background Brunhild approaches; she advances with firm and solemn step towards the front. She exclaims: "Silence your sorrow! I am the woman that all of you have betrayed. Siegfried's wife now takes her revenge." When Gudrun accuses Brunhild of being the sole cause of all this terrible misery, she replies in a pitiful voice: "Poor woman, be silent! Thou never hast been Siegfried's lawful wife. I was his spouse to whom he swore oaths of eternal faith, long before he had ever seen thee."

Gudrun.

(In heftigster Verzweiflung.)

(In the most vehement despair.)

Verfluchter Hagen!

Accursed Hagen!

Weh! ach weh!

Woe! Ah, woe!

Dass du das Gift mir rihest,

Thou gav'st me the heinous draught

Das ihr den Gatten entrückt!

To beguile her husband's faith.

O Jammer! Jammer!

O sadness! What sadness!

Wie jäh nun weiss ich,

On a sudden I see

Das Brünnhild' die Traute war,

Brunhild was the bride of his heart

Die durch den Trank er ver-gass!

Whom by that draught he forgot!

Gudrun turns with awe from Siegfried's body and bends with utmost grief over Gunther; she remains

* The fight between Hagen and Gunther, and the death of the latter by Hagen's hand, is not in accordance with the Nibelung traditions.

† See the Nibelungen Lied. "When Hagen drew near Siegfried's corpse, the blood began to ooze from the wounds, and it became thus evident who the murderer was."

thus motionless to the end. Long silence. Hagen stands leaning on his spear and shield, and seems absorbed in gloomy thought. He assumes a defiant attitude. Brunhild is alone in the middle of the stage; she is lost in contemplation of Siegfried's face. At first she shows deepest emotion, then overwhelming sadness. With solemn exaltation she turns to the vassals and tells them to pile up layers of wood so that she and Siegfried may be united amidst the roaring flames. The men obey her command, and erect during the following scene a huge funeral pyre. The women adorn it with hangings on which they strew herbs and flowers.

Brunhild, again gazing on Siegfried's body, muses: "The most faithful he was, and yet he betrayed me. His wife—his only true love—he deceived when he placed his sword between her and himself. More nobly than he no one ever swore oaths of fealty. None ever loved with purer love. And yet all his oaths, his truest love, he betrayed. O ye gods, ye guardians of sacred oaths, gaze now on your measureless guilt! Wotan, hear my complaint! By his daring deed thou hast eagerly longed for, thou hast doomed him to death. Me he had to betray, so that wise a woman might be. Now all I know. Thy ravens I hear rustling; I send them home to you."

She beckons to the men to lift Siegfried's body and bear it to the funeral pyre; at the same time she draws the ring from Siegfried's finger, contemplates it for some time, and at last places it on her finger. "Accursed ring, I give thee back to the Rhine; the fire that shall embrace me will redeem the gold from the curse." She turns to the background, where

Siegfried's body lies already on the pyre, and seizes a huge firebrand from one of the men.

Fliegt heim, ihr Raben !	Away, ye ravens !
Raun't es eurem Herrn,	Unravel to Wotan
Was hier am Rhein ihr gehört !	What here on the Rhine ye have heard !
An Brünnhild's Felsen	Follow the road
Fahret vorbei !	By Brunhild's rock !
Der dort noch lodert,	Tell Loki, who flames there,
Weiset Loge nach Walhall !	To fly to Valhall anon !
Denn der Götter Ende	The day of the doom
Dämmert nun auf :	Of the gods has dawned.
So—werf' ich den Brand	So—hurl I the torch
In Walhall's prangende Burg.	Into Valhall's towering heights.

Brunhild flings the brand into the funeral pyre, which quickly blazes up. Two ravens fly up from the shore and disappear towards the background. Two men bring in the horse; Brunhild seizes and quickly unbridles it.

Grane, mein Ross,	Grani, my horse,
Sei mir gegrüsst !	I greet thee here !
Weisst du, Freund,	Know'st thou, my friend,
Wohin ich dich führe ?	Whither we'll fare ?
Im Feuer leuchtend	Lo ! there lies
Liegt dort dein Herr,	Thy lord in the fire,
Siegfried, mein seliger Held.	Siegfried, the hallowed hero.
Dem Freunde zu folgen	To join him anon
Wieherst du freudig ?	Thou neighest with joy ?
Lockt dich zu ihm	Allures thee to Siegfried
Die lachende Lohe ?	The searing light ?
Fühl' meine Brust auch,	Feel how my bosom
Wie sie entbrennt ;	Fervently heaves !
Helles Feuer	Holy flames
Das Herz mir erfasst,	Flash through my heart.

Ihn zu umschlingen,	O, but to infold him,
Umschlossen von ihm,	To feel his embrace,
In mächtigster Minne	In burning love
Vermählt ihm zu sein !	Be bound unto him !
Heiaho ! Grane !	Heiajaho ! Grani !
Grüsse deinen Herrn !	Greet now the hero !
Siegfried ! Siegfried ! Sieh !	Siegfried ! Siegfried ! Behold !
Selig grüßt dich dein Weib !	Blissfully hails thee thy bride !

Brunhild leaps on the horse and takes it with one bound into the burning pyre. The flames at once blaze up so that the fire fills the entire space before the hall, and seems even to seize on the hall itself. The women, terrified, crowd toward the foreground. Suddenly the fire sinks, leaving only a dismal cloud which remains for some time hanging over the place; then it rises and parts. The Rhine has overflowed its bank and sweeps over the fire. The three Rhine-daughters have swum forward on its waves. Hagen, who has observed Brunhild's demeanor with increasing anxiety, is amazed at the appearance of the Rhine-daughters. He hastily throws away his spear, shield and helmet, and plunges, as if out of his senses, into the flood. He shouts: "Away from the ring!" Woglinde and Wellgunde twine their arms around his neck and so draw him with them into the deep. Flosshilde, swimming in front of them, holds up exultingly the ring which she has recovered. At the same time there appears in the sky, from the distance, a reddish glow like the Northern Light, which gradually increases. The men and women gaze in speechless emotion on the strange sight. Valhall is burning; the gods and heroes are seen calmly awaiting their doom—the Götterdämmerung.

NOTES.

Page 1.

Note 1.—The Norse form was Odhinn, the Old High German Wuotan, the Old Saxon Wuodan, Wôdan, the Anglo-Saxon Wôden, the Frisian Wêda, and the Longobard Wôdan or Guôdan.

Note 2.—See Grimm's Mythology. “*Metodsceaft seon*, Beowulf 2, 360. Cædmon 104, 31. In the North, faring to Odhinn, being guest with Odhinn, visiting Odhinn, meant simply to die, Fornald. sög. I. 118. 422–3, 2,366, and was synonymous with faring to Valhall, being guest at Valhall, ib. I. 106. Among the Christians these were turned into curses: *far thu til Odhins! Odhins eigi thik!*—may Odhin have thee! Here is shown the inversion of the kindly being, with whom one fain would dwell, into an evil one, whose abode inspires fear and dread.”

Page 9.

Note 3.—The myth of Frey is also given in the author's “Great Epics of Mediæval Germany,” page 123. It is found in the beautiful Edda song of Skirniför (the journey of Skirnir), and also in the Younger Edda. Frey possessed a boar named Gullinbursti, whose golden bristles lighted up the night like day, who ran with the speed of a horse, and drew his chariot. The god once gazed down from Hlidhskialf, the seat of Wotan, upon the worlds, and beheld in the North at Jotunheim (the home of the giants) the maiden Gerda, who was of such wonderful beauty that both the sky and the sea glistened from the radiance of her white arms. Frey was filled with ardent love

for her ; but her father, the giant Gymer, guarded her in his dwelling, surrounded by wavering fire and furious dogs. The god's messenger was called Skirnir (the bright one) ; he was sent for, and Frey asked him to bring the maiden to him. Skirnir declared himself ready to go if Frey would give him his horse to cross the flames, and his sword of surpassing virtue which could put itself in motion against the giants. Frey gave him the horse and the enchanted sword ; this is the reason why he found himself unarmed when he fought with Beli (Gerda's brother), and slew him with a hart's horn. Yet he found himself in a terrible plight, when at the Ragnarok (Götterdämmerung) he faced Surt (Swart) in a single combat ; he then sorely missed his trusty blade. Skirnir overcame all obstacles on Frey's steed ; the whole of Jotunheim trembled under its hoofs, and he penetrated to Gerda's dwelling, where, after much resistance on the part of the maiden, he obtained in the end her promise that after nine nights she would marry Frey.

Frey is the sun-god ; the boar with golden bristles is the symbol of the sun. Skirnir represents the god, who himself in an older form of the myth undertook the journey. He freed the maiden from the powers of darkness by slaying the monster that guarded her, and by crossing the flame-wall which surrounded her. Gerda is the earth held in bond by the frost-giants, that is, by snow and ice in winter. The god's sword is the sunbeam, which he surrenders to obtain the possession of Gerda ; or, in other words, the glowing sun penetrates the earth and frees it from the power of the frost-giants. Beli (the barker) and the furious dogs are the roaring storms. The *wavering fire* surrounding Gerda's dwelling (and *Brynhild's castle*, as we shall see hereafter) denotes the burning funeral pyre, as Jacob Grimm has shown. The earth in winter is, as it were, lifeless, and therefore belongs to the funeral pyre, and thus to the powers of the lower world. It was customary to intertwine the funeral pyre with thorns, and to light it with a thorn ; we see now what is meant when Wotan pricks Brynhild with the sleep-thorn and she falls into death-like sleep. A relic of the myth appears in the charming fairy story of the "Sleeping Beauty" (Dornroeschen). It is remarkable that the name of the

infernal river *Πυριφλεγέθων* has the same meaning as the wavering fire; the way to the lower world leads through the glowing funeral pyre.

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Note. 4.—The myth of Balder bears a most prominent relation to the Nibelung story, and foreshadows the near advent of the Götterdämmerung. It is also found on page 120 of the "Great Epics." Balder, the son of Wotan and Fricka, was the god of the summer sunlight, the beloved of gods and men. He was so fair and dazzling in form and features that rays of light seemed to issue from him. His dwelling was called Breidablick (the broad-shining splendor), where nothing unclean could enter. The Younger Edda relates that he was tormented by dreams which foreboded danger to his life. Thereupon the gods held counsel together, and his mother Fricka exacted an oath from fire, water, iron, and all kinds of metal, stones, earth, trees, sicknesses, beasts, birds, and creeping things that they should not hurt Balder. Then it became the pastime of Balder and the gods that he should stand up at their assemblies, while some of them would shoot at him, others would hew at him; but whatever they did, no harm came to him. When Loki saw this, it displeased him very much that Balder was not scathed. So by cunning he learned from Fricka, to whom he had gone in the likeness of a woman, that no oath had been exacted from the mistletoe, as it seemed too young. Loki pulled up the mistletoe and went to the assembly. There Balder's blind brother Hodir (darkness) stood aside from the others, but Loki placed the mistletoe in his hand and treacherously told him to shoot at Balder. Hodir was of tremendous strength, and without malice hurled the fatal dart at Balder, who was pierced by it and fell to the ground. The gods were struck speechless with horror; but Wotan took this misfortune most to heart, since he best comprehended how great a loss and injury the fall of the beautiful god was to all of them. His corpse was taken to the ship Hringhorn, in order to be burned there; and as his wife Nanna beheld this, she died of grief, and was burned on the funeral pyre at the side of her husband.

Balder's death was the sign of the approaching destruction of

the gods and of the world through the powers of evil and darkness when the Fenris-wolf swallows Wotan and the heavens are rent in twain. Balder is the god of summer, and cannot be hurt by any weapon; only the mistletoe, which needs so little the warm sun that its fruit ripens in winter, and which grows on trees, not upon the earth, can harm him. The myth denotes the disappearance of the bright summer and the approach of winter with its dark and long nights. The idea of the struggle between the powers of nature, as seen in the seasons of the year, was transferred to the mythical world-year. Balder is the prototype of Siegfried, the hero of the Nibelung sagas. It is probable that a myth combining the chief incidents of the stories of Frey and Balder was originally ascribed to Wotan, and thus Siegfried would be identical with the chief of the Teutonic gods.

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